MARVEL MASTERWORKS
THE FANTASTIC FOUR
VOLUME 27

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 286-296

JOHN BYRNE

WITH ROGER STERN & JERRY ORDWAY

COLLECTOR'S EDITION! 30 PAGES—NO ADS!
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Fantastic Four
SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
LIKE A PHOENIX...

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MARVEL MASTERWORKS

PRESENTS

THE Fantastic Four

VOLUME 27

COLLECTING

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 286-296

JOHN BYRNE

WITH ROGER STERN & JERRY ORDWAY

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MARVEL MASTERWORKS
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NOS. 286-296

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FANTASTIC FOUR CREATED BY STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY

MARVEL MASTERWORKS
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INTRODUCTION
BY MICHAEL HIGGINS

One morning I came into the office I shared with editor Mike Carlin. We had been working on *Fantastic Four* #293 when suddenly the unexpected happened. Just like that, it was over! Mike told me John Byrne had quit the FF.

In many ways it came as a big shock. After all, John had been working on *FF* for just about six solid years and over sixty consecutive issues! In other ways, it really wasn't surprising at all…except for the fact that, believe it or not, John suggested I replace him as writer on *FF*. No kidding. I'm not sure, but I suspect John thought he might provide me with the seeds of stories he would no longer be able to bring to fruition himself. Maybe he was thinking I could work on *FF* along with John Romita Jr., since Byrne had considered the possibility of relinquishing the art chores and had approached JRJR about taking on the title. In an alternate universe, there is a John Byrne/John Romita Jr. *Fantastic Four* run that began right about where this volume of *Fantastic Four Masterworks* concludes. But, that isn't what happened, and the two Johns didn't end up collaborating until a few years later on *Iron Man*.

Not long before, John Byrne had rocked the comic world with the revelation that he was going to be writing and penciling a *Superman* relaunch for, as they used to say, Marvel's Distinguished Competition. This explains why Byrne was hoping he could get JRJR to take on the penciling assignment on the *FF.* Byrne had already begun to work on *Superman*—I had the privilege of seeing the first issue in pencil form in his studio—but John fully intended to work for DC in *addition* to Marvel, not *instead* of Marvel. As a freelancer he was entitled to do that, and John's final issues of *FF* were done concurrently with his work on *Superman.*

But then came *X-Factor*, which brings us to the first story in this *Marvel Masterworks* edition. Along with *FF* and the rest of our titles, Mike Carlin and I were chosen to be the editorial team on a new series called *X-Factor.* When Mike and I were assigned the title, there was already a creative team attached to the project. In fact, several plots had already been written. We were also given some very specific guidelines to follow. The idea was that the current all-new X-Men team was so different from the original X-Men that it had actually become a different entity entirely. *X-Factor* would be a standalone title and wouldn't be directly tied to the X-Men continuity. We were also told that the characterizations of the X-Men as seen in *Secret Wars* were to be considered the definitive model for us to follow, that *X-Factor* should have a different style and feel from *The Uncanny X-Men.* And, with these guidelines in place, Mike and I were off and running—the assignment to create a brand-new title featuring the original X-Men.

Of course, right off we faced a fairly significant problem. One of our main characters was dead. A few years earlier, there was a controversial story culminating in the death of Phoenix, who, as Jean Grey, had been Marvel Girl in the original X-Men. Famously, the character had been killed off when it was decided that Jean should be made to pay for crimes committed while her body had been possessed by the alien entity known as Dark Phoenix. The story, written by Chris Claremont and illustrated by John Byrne and Terry Austin, had undergone major revisions before being sent to print. In the original version, Jean Grey survived. In the revised version, Jean Grey perished, seemingly forever. That was the current status of things in 1985, so as we began working on ideas for the revival of the original X-Men, over and over I kept hearing the words, "Of course, we can't use Phoenix" and "We can't bring back Jean Grey." This was just accepted as a given, until one day during a lunch meeting at a Mexican restaurant, I uttered the immortal words, "I don't understand—we're Marvel Comics. Why can't we bring Jean Grey back?" Eyes bulged. Heads turned toward EIC

Jim Shooter, the only man empowered to make such a decision…who slowly, cautiously responded, "Well… if we do it right…"

And that's how it happened. Just like that, Jean Grey—was coming back to life. It was no longer a question of *were* we going to do it, but *how* were we going to do it. If *X-Factor* was to be independent of the X-Men continuity…why not spin it out of the titles our crew edited instead? John Byrne and Roger Stern were long-time friends and collaborators. Roger was even *X-Men* editor on the first phase of "The Dark Phoenix Saga." In addition to *Doctor Strange*, Roger was the regular writer on *The Avengers.* Earlier in his career, Mike had worked with Roger as an assistant editor under Mark Gruenwald, who was currently writing *Captain America* for Mike and myself. John, Roger, Mark and Mike were the team who conceived the storyline that would resurrect Jean Grey—setting the stage for and creating as much buzz as possible for the premiere issue of *X-Factor.* Not only that, but Terry Austin, John's artistic collaborator on his classic *Uncanny X-Men* run, agreed to ink *FF* #286, reuniting the legendary team for the *Rebirth of Phoenix!* Well…sort of…but as it turns out, we weren't actually going to be bringing back Phoenix.

John remembered an idea he'd discussed with Roger Stern some time earlier suggesting that Jean Grey had never actually become Phoenix—or Dark Phoenix. It was John who suggested we revive the idea that Jean Grey had actually been in stasis down at the bottom of Jamaica Bay for the past few years as the premise of our crossover. But, then, this raised another little problem. John attributed the Jean-at-the-bottom-of-Jamaica-Bay concept to Roger. Roger, however, was the one who insisted it was *not* his idea. It was his recollection that it was actually Kurt Busiek's idea. So, even though Kurt wasn't directly involved in any of the work done on this crossover, he did receive compensation and a credit in *FF*. I guess I should take the rap for being the person who should have made sure Kurt's name was spelled correctly…but didn't. Sorry, Kurt! Ironically, as a result of events soon to transpire, the person who doesn't get credit at all in *FF* #286 is John Byrne.

Back in those days, we kept to strict production schedules overseen by traffic manager Virginia Romita, wife of legendary Spider-Man artist John Romita, and mother of the aforementioned John Romita Jr. Virginia was the one who made sure every editorial office was on time—or at least close to it—working on multiple issues of every series at the same time, months ahead of the publication dates. So, while all of the preceding was going on, the team of Byrne, Carlin & Higgins was hard at work juggling several other issues simultaneously. With *FF* #287, Mike and I proudly welcomed Joe Sinnott as John's inker. Joe, of course, first inked Jack Kirby's *FF* pencils way back in 1962 in *FF* #5, featuring the introduction of Fantastic Four's master villain, Doctor Doom. Even more importantly, Joe had long been considered the quintessential inker of the FF, not only polishing the work of Jack Kirby during the most significant, groundbreaking run in its history—applying pen and brush to virtually every page of Kirby's FF pencils from 1965 straight through to 1970—but also continuing to ink Kirby's successors on FF on almost every issue for another decade after that! It was our privilege to have him aboard, even though it turned out to be just for a couple of issues. As hard as it may be to believe, *FF* #287-288 picked up on subtle story elements involving Doctor Doom planted more than two years earlier in issue #260, which just happens to be the first issue I was assistant editor on. Who better to render the return of the "real" Doctor Doom than the man who inked his very first appearance? Issue #288 also featured the Beyonder and wrapped story elements begun in *Secret Wars II.*

Then we welcomed back our old pal Al Gordon, who hopped aboard for the rest of John Byrne's run on the book…with the exception of issue #291, which turned out to be the final issue of *FF* I was credited on the letters page as Assistant Editor. Later, Mike told me he decided to leave my name in that issue since I was the one who asked P. Craig Russell to ink it…and because he knew how big a fan of Craig's work I was. I still am! He is one of comics' greats! FF fans may not have

been terribly enthusiastic to find the *Marvel Team-Up* villain, the Basilisk, gracing the pages of *FF* #289, but he was made fast work of, and they were probably much more enthusiastic about the return of classic FF characters like Blastaar and Annihilus in issues #289-290. I know I was. The fan in me always got a special kick out of seeing Jack Kirby characters re-envisioned by John, who was doing his best to channel Jack in his artwork at this time and it really showed. In addition to P. Craig Russell, issue #291 also featured a reference to Bob Dylan, as it was named after one of his songs, "The Times They Are A-Changin'," even though John substituted a "G" and exclamation point for Dylan's apostrophe. This type of thing appeals to me and I had a habit of referencing songs in the titles of the comics I would later write. Something about this storyline always reminded me of those episodes of *Star Trek* when they would go back in time to Earth's past, or find themselves on a planet that closely paralleled Earth of the past. Oddly enough, issue #292 sort of features the return of another classic FF villain…first seen way back in *FF* #21—in which the Hate Monger was originally revealed to be none other than Adolf Hitler himself. Maybe I'm stretching things a bit, but if the villainous mustache fits…

By this time, we were working as far ahead as issue #293, featuring, among other things, John Byrne's take on the West Coast Avengers. In many ways, this could be viewed as just a taste of things that were to come…but unfortunately, not quite yet. There would still be other worlds to explore and other goals to achieve before John finally took a crack at that team on a regular basis. Everything seemed to be running along smoothly, and with *FF* #286 lettered and colored it was finally ready to go to the printer. But, just as the book was about to leave the office, the caveat that *X-Factor* be completely independent of the *X-Men* was rescinded. That had some significant implications, and *X-Factor* #1 was given to the X-Men office for their approval. The go-ahead was then given for portions of John's *FF* #286 art and script to be retooled. Certainly, none of us were happy about this, but it was the type of thing that happened periodically. Alive, dead or anywhere in between, Jean Grey seemed unable to avoid controversy. When John opted not to take part in making any of the changes himself, *X-Factor* penciler Butch Guice stepped in and both penciled and inked the new art that would be substituted for John and Terry's. John's unadulterated artwork, including a previously unseen page, can be found in the special features at the back of this book, so you'll be able to compare the before and after versions for yourselves. When John decided to remove his name entirely from the credits of this issue, Mike Carlin suggested it should be something akin to Jim Steranko's famous "Do We Have To Tell You?" credit in *X-Men* #51. And so in *FF* #286, John's writer/penciler credit read simply, "You Know Who."

This was the way things stood when I came in to the office that historic day and Mike told me John had made the decision to leave Marvel. I would say it was a matter of principle, and John simply chose not to continue to work under the conditions that existed at that time. When you really care about the work you are creating, it's difficult to stand by and watch that labor of love turn into something other than what you intended. There was some reshuffling of assignments after this, and while I continued unofficially as assistant editor of *X-Factor* for several issues, the book was reassigned to a new editor with issue #2. Around the same time, the editorial team of Higgins and Carlin was dissolved. Suddenly, after two years I was no longer working with Mike Carlin and after three years I was no longer working on the *Fantastic Four.* Mike Carlin got a new assistant and I was given a minor promotion and sent off to work on some lesser titles like *Defenders of the Earth* and *Animax.* In the wake of John's departure, Mike once again recruited Roger Stern, this time to wrap up John's unresolved plot threads. Under the circumstances Mike found himself in, I think Roger was the perfect choice to follow John as writer, and persuading Jerry Ordway to return not only to ink the book but to pencil it as well was nothing short of a stroke of genius. Roger Stern and Jerry Ordway made perfect sense! It wasn't John Byrne's *FF* anymore, but there would at least be some semblance of consistency and familiarity for the fans with *FF* #294-295. The vessel may have lost its rudder…but Captain Carlin had managed to keep the ship afloat.

In just about two years, John Byrne would be back at Marvel working regularly for the company again…but he never did another issue of the *Fantastic Four* after #293, except for his contributions to the plot of issue #294-295. And even though I didn't get to write the *FF,* amidst these shake-ups, Mike coerced me into accepting my first writing assignment, the *G.I. Joe/Transformers* miniseries. But, even before I had written the first plot, Mike's tenure at Marvel came to an abrupt end while working on the final issue in this collection, *FF* #296, the 25th Anniversary issue. Not to worry, though. Mike went on to one of the longest, most successful editorial careers in the history of DC Comics. Claims to the contrary notwithstanding, I always believed Mike was a fine editor who did a great job and we are still friends today, almost 40 years later. I was offered the opportunity to follow John Byrne and Mike Carlin, to continue to work with them, scripting one of the Superman titles. And, I would have been working with Jerry Ordway, who also quickly became part of the Superman team. The following year, Roger Stern made the jump as well. It was a very tempting offer, but with all the shake-ups in the comic industry around that time, for better or worse, I ultimately declined. I decided to stay at Marvel because I always loved Marvel comics the most. I continued to work for Marvel for more than another decade…but, like John and Mike, I never worked on the *Fantastic Four* ever again.

Quite a bit of what John Byrne intended made it into the anniversary issue, as well as the next few issues. John's plans had already been revealed in a *Marvel Age* interview that can also be found in this volume's special features. The FF's celebratory 25th anniversary issue ended up being scripted by none other than Stan Lee himself, with an amazing collection of Marvel's top artists—most of whom I'd worked with over the years—contributing in John's stead. Although he received sole credit as editor in this issue, Mike was gone by the time the book was actually sent to print, and the *Fantastic Four* would be reassigned to a new editor. Roger stuck around for a few more issues to help with the transition, utilizing as many of John's ideas as possible… but then Roger, too, bid a bittersweet farewell to the FF. The FF would soon have a new regular writer and take off in an entirely new direction…but that will be a story for someone else to tell. We'd really had a good run…and I was sorry when my time with the FF came to an end, but I'll always be glad I had the opportunity to play my small role in the history of The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!

'Nuff Said.

Michael Higgins started his career with Marvel in 1978 as a Bullpen production staffer and over the next decade rose through the ranks, eventually becoming a full-fledged editor. After leaving his editorial position, Higgins continued to work for Marvel until 1999, writing, inking, coloring and lettering dozens of titles including Conan the Barbarian, *Wolverine in* Marvel Comics Presents, Punisher, Excalibur, Cable, X-51 *and* The Avengers.

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IT CONTINUES HERE!
X-FACTOR
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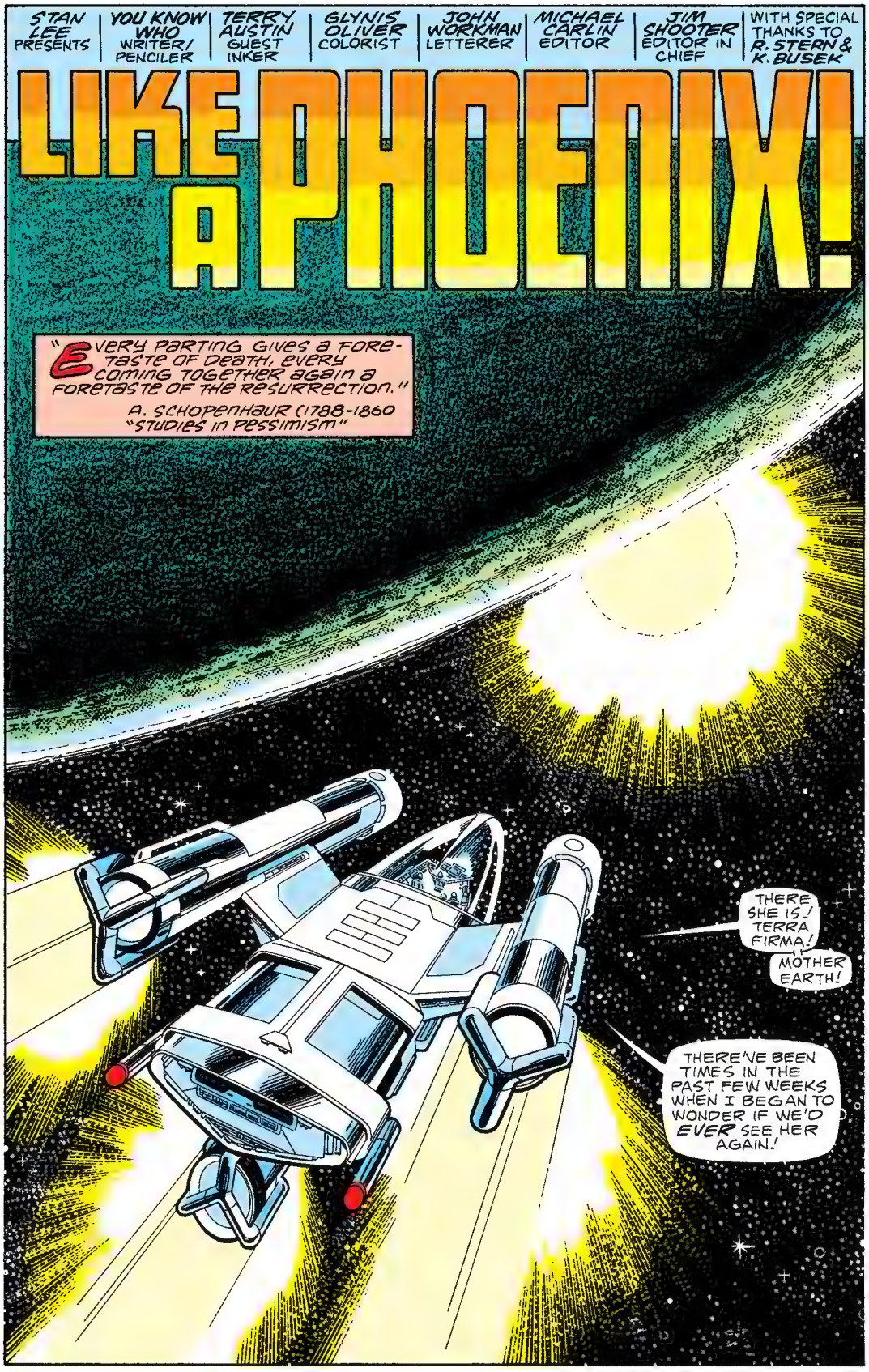
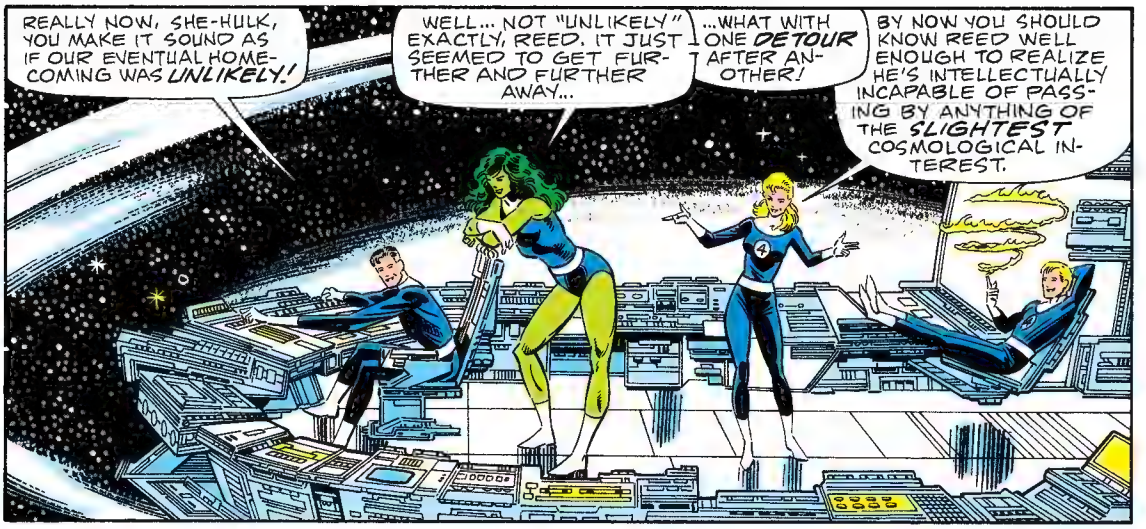
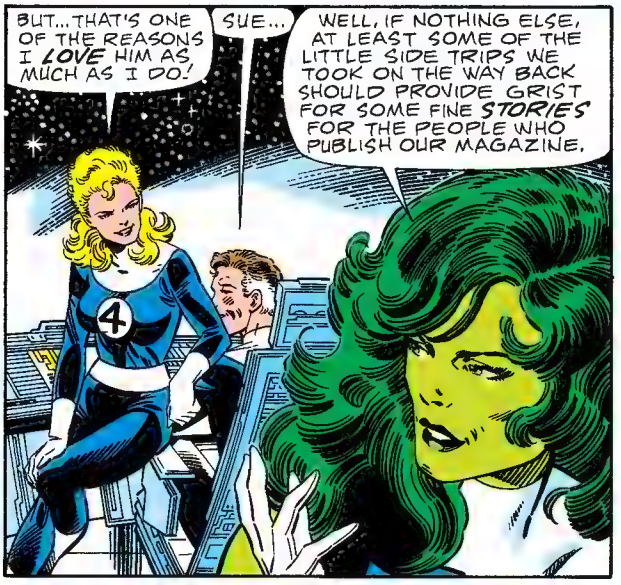
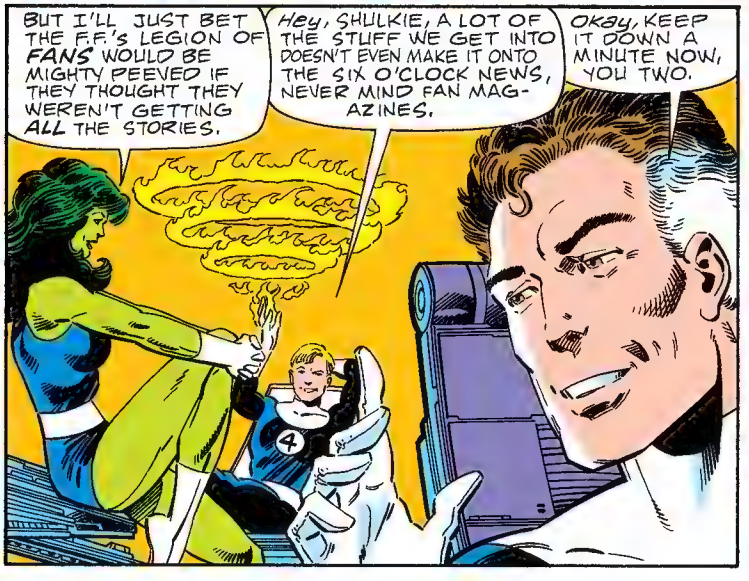
X-MEN
LIKE A PHOENIX...


STAN LEE PRESENTS
YOU KNOW WHO WRITER/ PENCILER
TERRY AUSTIN GUEST INKER
GLYNIS OLIVER COLORIST
JOHN WORKMAN LETTERER
MICHAEL CARLIN EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER EDITOR IN CHIEF
WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO R. STERN & K. BUSEK
LIKE A PHOENIX!
"EVERY PARTING GIVES A FORE-TASTE OF DEATH, EVERY COMING TOGETHER AGAIN A FORETASTE OF THE RESURRECTION."
A. SCHOPENHAUR (1788-1860 "STUDIES IN PESSIMISM"
THERE SHE IS! TERRA FIRMA!
MOTHER EARTH!
THERE'VE BEEN TIMES IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS WHEN I BEGAN TO WONDER IF WE'D EVER SEE HER AGAIN!


REALLY NOW, SHE-HULK, YOU MAKE IT SOUND AS IF OUR EVENTUAL HOMECOMING WAS UNLIKELY!
WELL... NOT "UNLIKELY" EXACTLY, REED. IT JUST SEEMED TO GET FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY...
...WHAT WITH ONE DETOUR AFTER ANOTHER!
BY NOW YOU SHOULD KNOW REED WELL ENOUGH TO REALIZE HE'S INTELLECTUALLY INCAPABLE OF PASSING BY ANYTHING OF THE SLIGHTEST COSMOLOGICAL INTEREST.

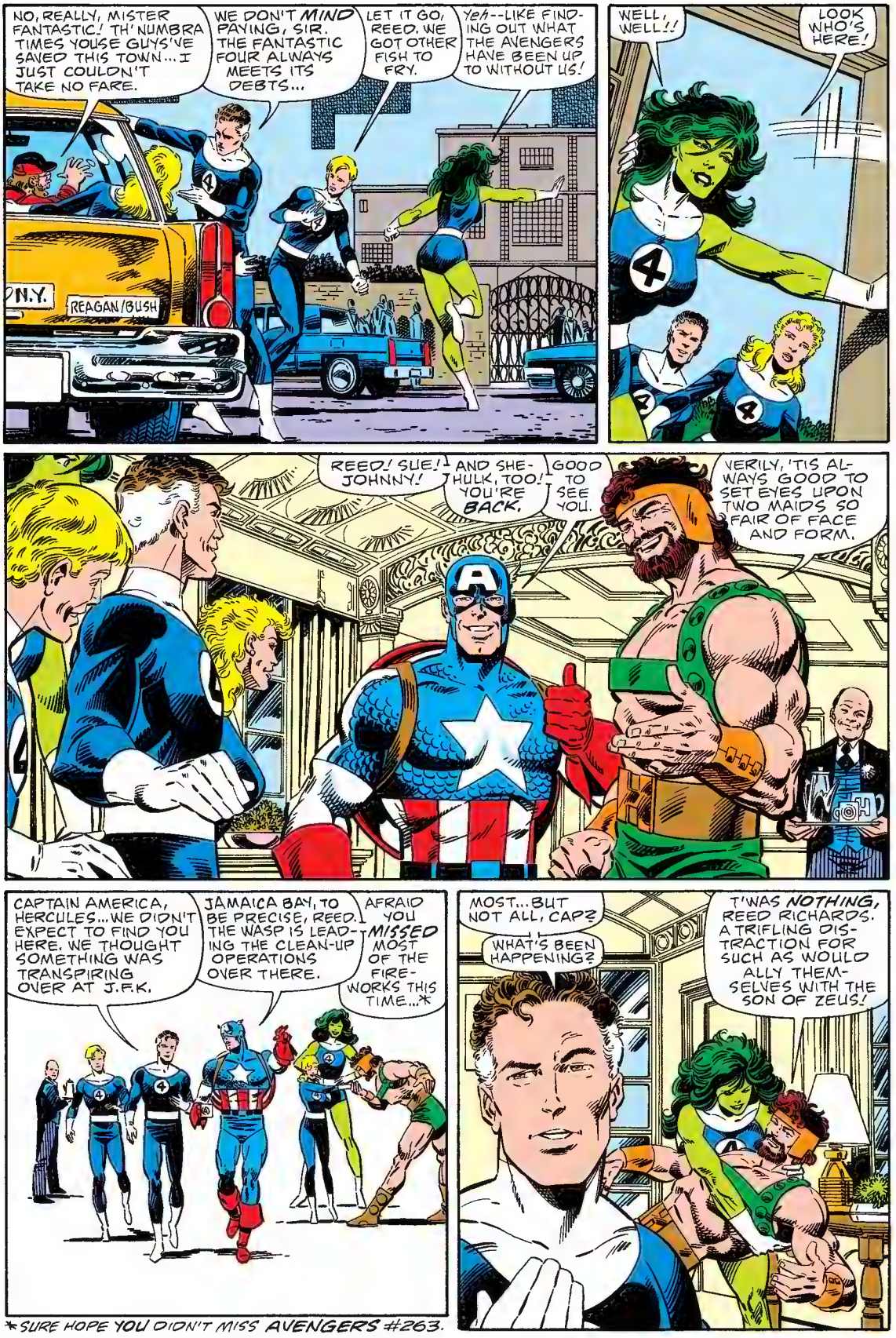

BUT... THAT'S ONE OF THE REASONS I LOVE HIM AS MUCH AS I DO!
SUE...
WELL, IF NOTHING ELSE, AT LEAST SOME OF THE LITTLE SIDE TRIPS WE TOOK ON THE WAY BACK SHOULD PROVIDE GRIST FOR SOME FINE STORIES FOR THE PEOPLE WHO PUBLISH OUR MAGAZINE.

MAYBE. LAST TIME I HEARD, THERE WAS A THEORY OVER THERE THAT "COSMIC DOESN'T SELL."
AND YOU CAN'T GET MUCH MORE COSMIC THAN THE LAST FEW WEEKS.
MAYBE NOT, TORCHIE...

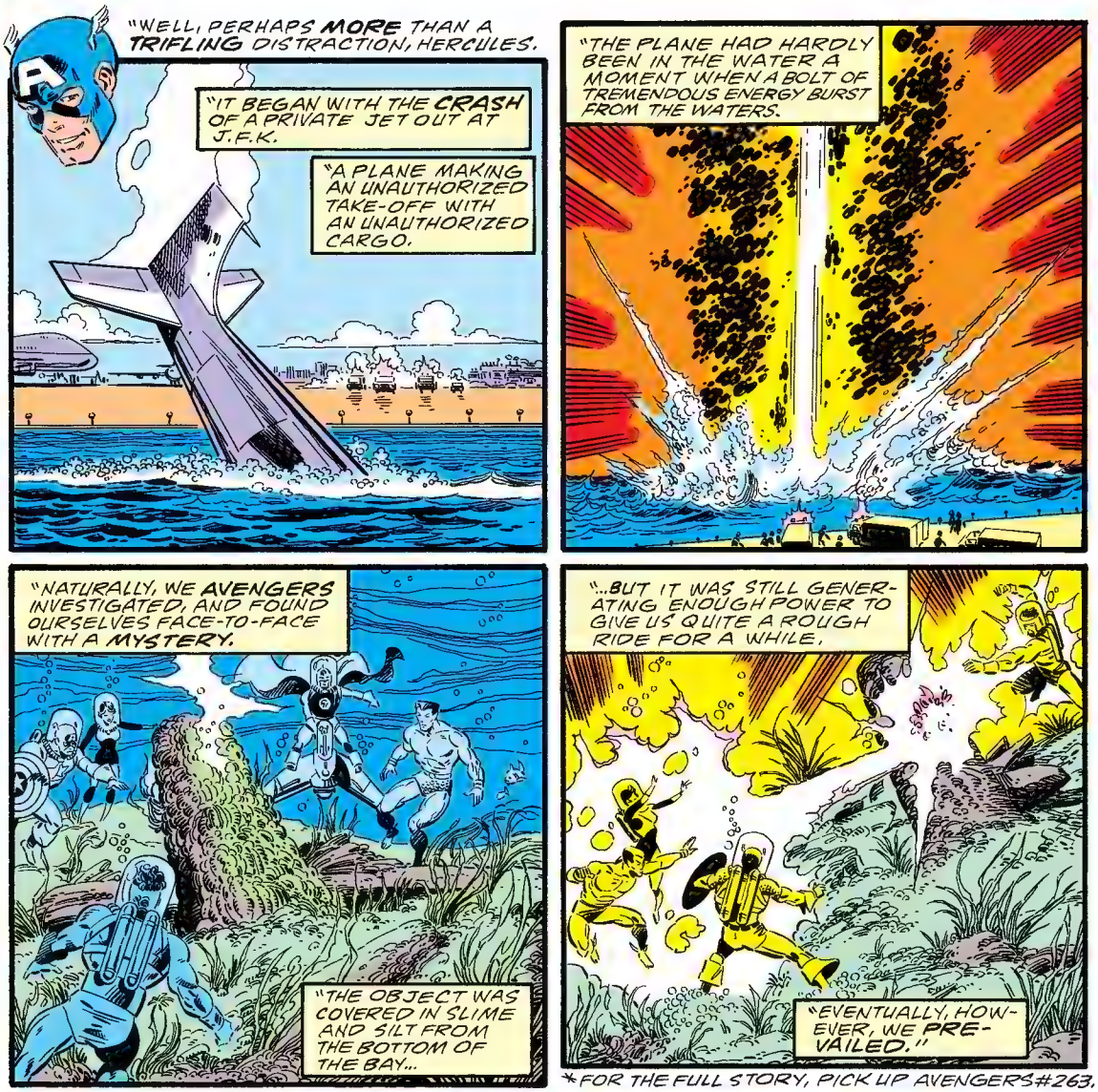

BUT I'LL JUST BET THE F.F.'S LEGION OF FANS WOULD BE MIGHTY PEEVED IF THEY THOUGHT THEY WEREN'T GETTING ALL THE STORIES.
Hey, SHULKIE, A LOT OF THE STUFF WE GET INTO DOESN'T EVEN MAKE IT ONTO THE SIX O'CLOCK NEWS, NEVER MIND FAN MAGAZINES.
Okay, KEEP IT DOWN A MINUTE NOW, YOU TWO.

I'M GOING TO CONTACT J.F.K.* FOR CLEARANCE TO LAND.
*JOHN F. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, NEW YORK.

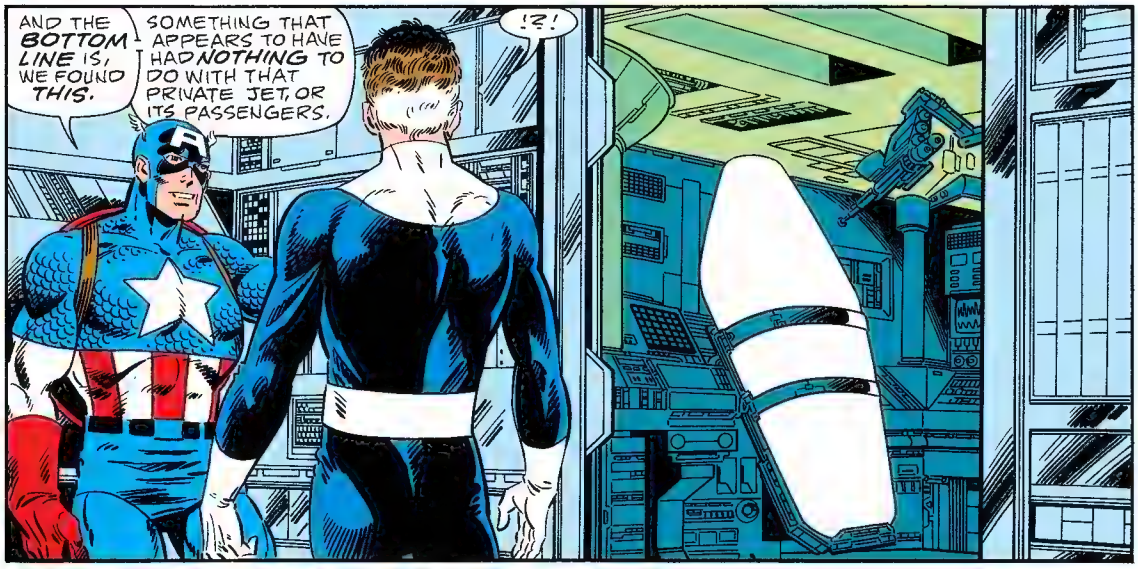
REED RICHARDS CALLING KENNEDY FLIGHT CONTROL. REQUESTING CLEARANCE TO LAND.
REPEAT, THIS IS REED RICHARDS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR CALLING J.F.K.
J.F.K. FLIGHT CONTROL TO REED RICHARDS.
CLEARANCE *DENIED.* REPEAT, CLEARANCE DENIED.
WE ARE CLOSED TO ALL INCOMING TRAFFIC UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.
DIVERT TO LA GUARDIA, FANTASTIC FOUR.
RICHARDS TO KENNEDY. IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
CAN WE BE OF ANY ASSISTANCE?
NEGATIVE. EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL NOW.
THE *AVENGERS* ARE HERE FINISHING WITH THE MOPPING UP.
THE AVENGERS! *Huh!* FIGURES MY OL' TEAMMATES WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SITTING ON THEIR HANDS WHILE WE'VE BEEN STAR-HOPPING.
REED, MAYBE WE SHOULD HEAD STRAIGHT BACK TO HEADQUARTERS AND FIND OUT WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON?
IF WE WERE BOUND FOR THE OLD BAXTER BUILDING, I'D SAY *FINE,* SUE. BUT AVENGER'S MANSION* ISN'T EQUIPPED FOR A VEHICLE OF THIS SIZE TO LAND.
OUR BEST PLAN WILL BE TO LAND AT LA GUARDIA AND TAKE A TAXI OVER TO MANHATTAN AS QUICKLY AS WE CAN...
*WHERE THE F.F. HAVE BEEN STAYING SINCE THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR H.Q.

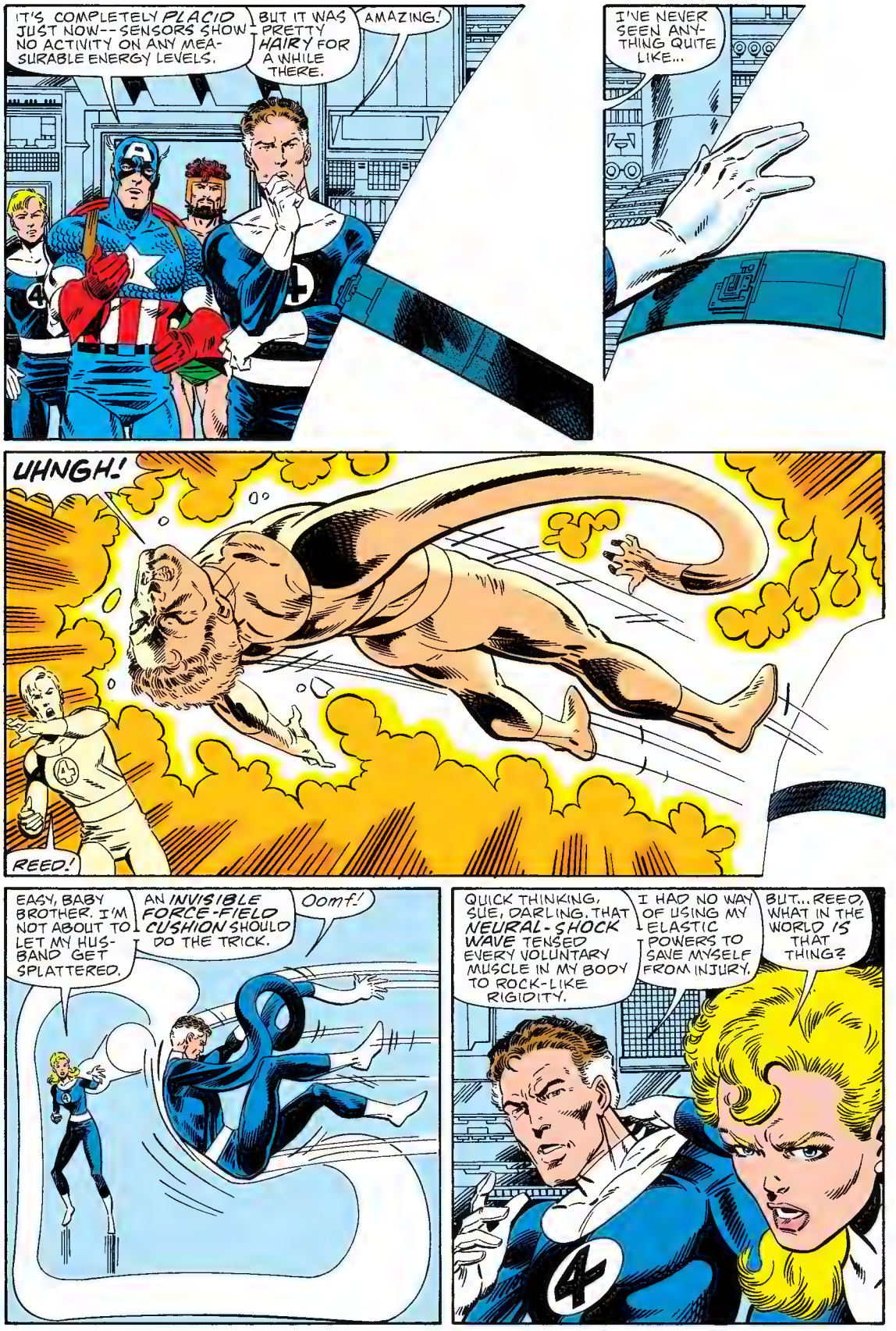

NO, REALLY, MISTER FANTASTIC! TH' NUMBRA TIMES YOUSE GUYS'VE SAVED THIS TOWN... I JUST COULDN'T TAKE NO FARE.
WE DON'T MIND PAYING, SIR. THE FANTASTIC FOUR ALWAYS MEETS ITS DEBTS...
LET IT GO, REED. WE GOT OTHER FISH TO FRY.
Yeh--LIKE FINDING OUT WHAT THE AVENGERS HAVE BEEN UP TO WITHOUT US!
N.Y.
REAGAN/BUSH
WELL, WELL!!
LOOK WHO'S HERE!
REED! SUE! JOHNNY!
AND SHE-HULK, TOO! YOU'RE BACK.
GOOD TO SEE YOU.
VERILY, 'TIS ALWAYS GOOD TO SET EYES UPON TWO MAIDS SO FAIR OF FACE AND FORM.
CAPTAIN AMERICA, HERCULES... WE DIDN'T EXPECT TO FIND YOU HERE. WE THOUGHT SOMETHING WAS TRANSPIRING OVER AT J.F.K.
JAMAICA BAY, TO BE PRECISE, REED. THE WASP IS LEADING THE CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS OVER THERE.
AFRAID YOU MISSED MOST OF THE FIREWORKS THIS TIME...*
MOST... BUT NOT ALL, CAP?
WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?
T'WAS NOTHING, REED RICHARDS. A TRIFLING DISTRACTION FOR SUCH AS WOULD ALLY THEMSELVES WITH THE SON OF ZEUS!

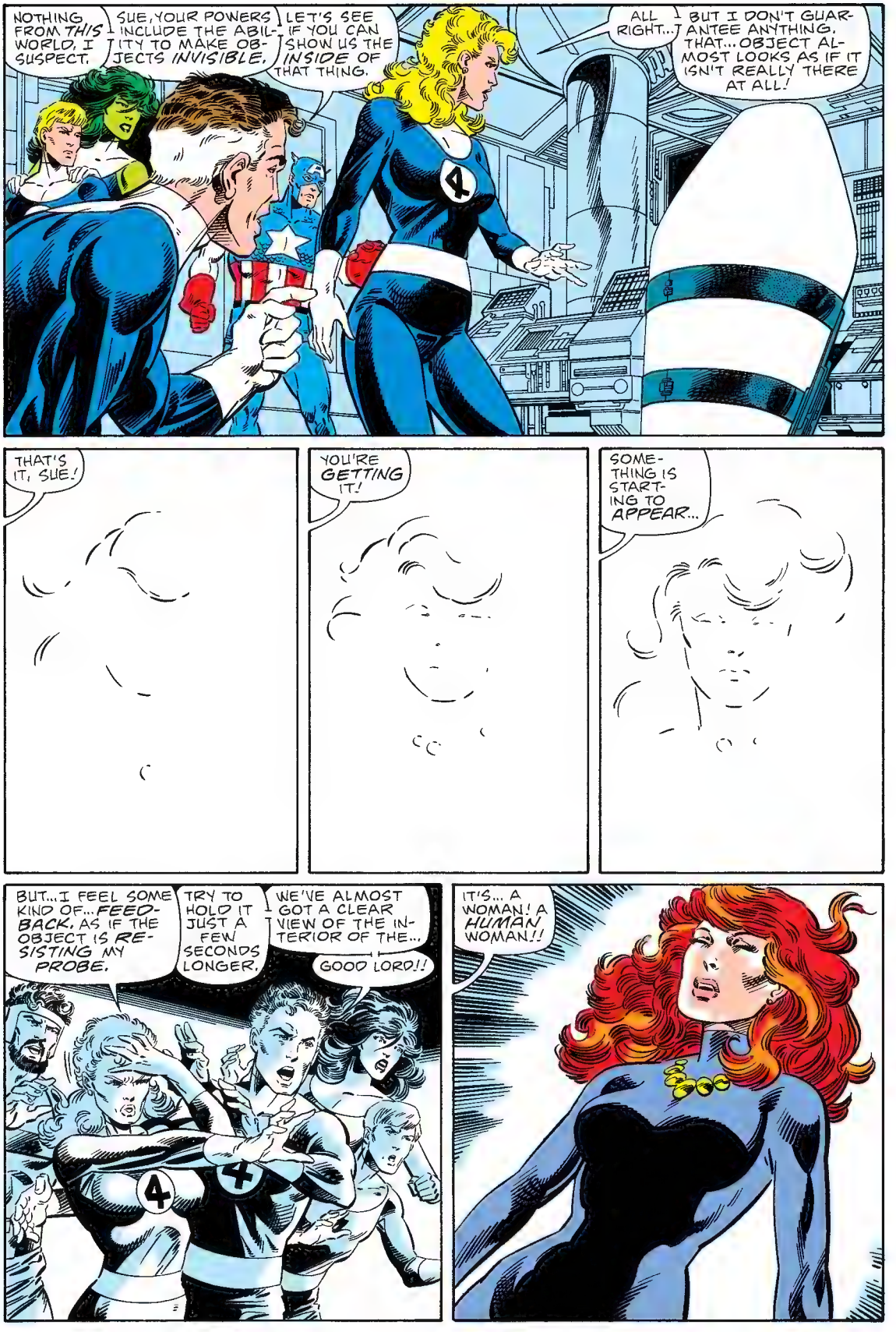
*SURE HOPE YOU DIDN'T MISS AVENGERS #263.


"WELL, PERHAPS MORE THAN A TRIFLING DISTRACTION, HERCULES.
"IT BEGAN WITH THE CRASH OF A PRIVATE JET OUT AT J.F.K.
"A PLANE MAKING AN UNAUTHORIZED TAKE-OFF WITH AN UNAUTHORIZED CARGO.
"THE PLANE HAD HARDLY BEEN IN THE WATER A MOMENT WHEN A BOLT OF TREMENDOUS ENERGY BURST FROM THE WATERS.
"NATURALLY, WE AVENGERS INVESTIGATED, AND FOUND OURSELVES FACE-TO-FACE WITH A MYSTERY.
"THE OBJECT WAS COVERED IN SLIME AND SILT FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE BAY...
"...BUT IT WAS STILL GENERATING ENOUGH POWER TO GIVE US QUITE A ROUGH RIDE FOR A WHILE.
"EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER, WE PREVAILED."

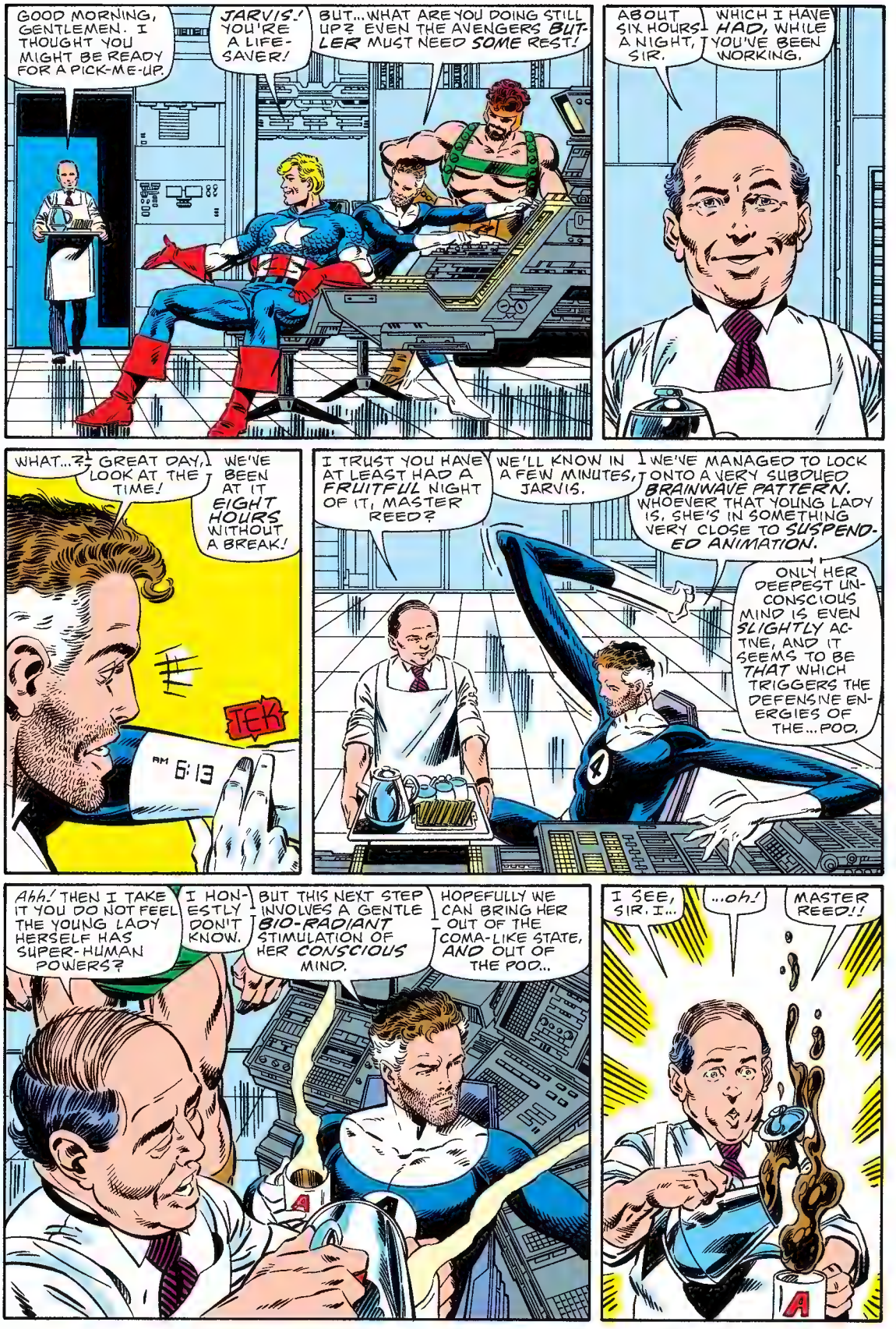
*FOR THE FULL STORY, PICK UP AVENGERS #263.

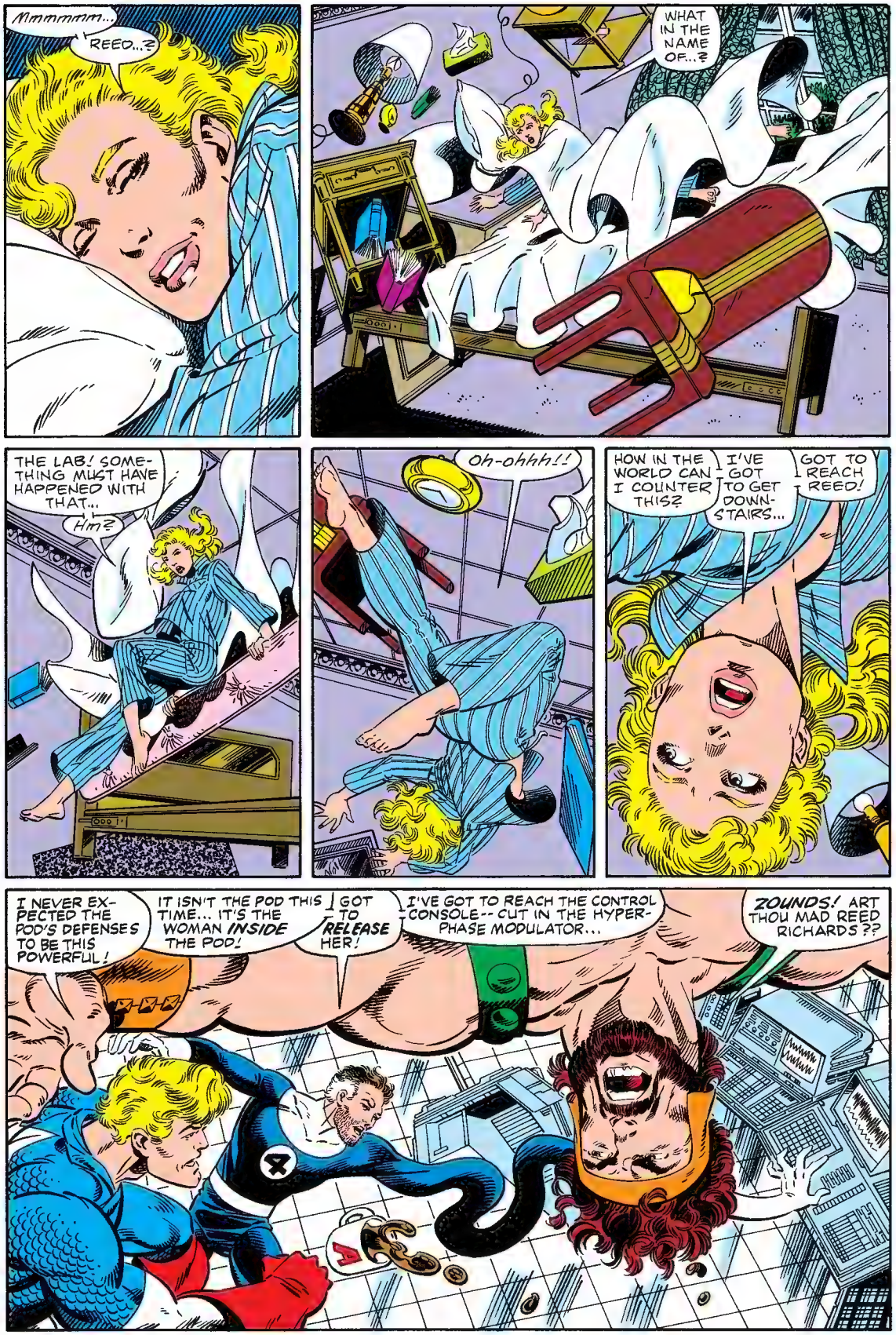

AND THE BOTTOM LINE IS, WE FOUND THIS.
SOMETHING THAT APPEARS TO HAVE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT PRIVATE JET, OR ITS PASSENGERS.
!?!


IT'S COMPLETELY PLACID JUST NOW--SENSORS SHOW NO ACTIVITY ON ANY MEASURABLE ENERGY LEVELS.
BUT IT WAS PRETTY HAIRY FOR A WHILE THERE.
AMAZING!
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING QUITE LIKE...
UHNGH!
REED!
EASY, BABY BROTHER. I'M NOT ABOUT TO LET MY HUSBAND GET SPLATTERED.
AN INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD CUSHION SHOULD DO THE TRICK.
Oomf!
QUICK THINKING, SUE, DARLING. THAT NEURAL-SHOCK WAVE TENSED EVERY VOLUNTARY MUSCLE IN MY BODY TO ROCK-LIKE RIGIDITY.
I HAD NO WAY OF USING MY ELASTIC POWERS TO SAVE MYSELF FROM INJURY.
BUT... REED, WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THAT THING?

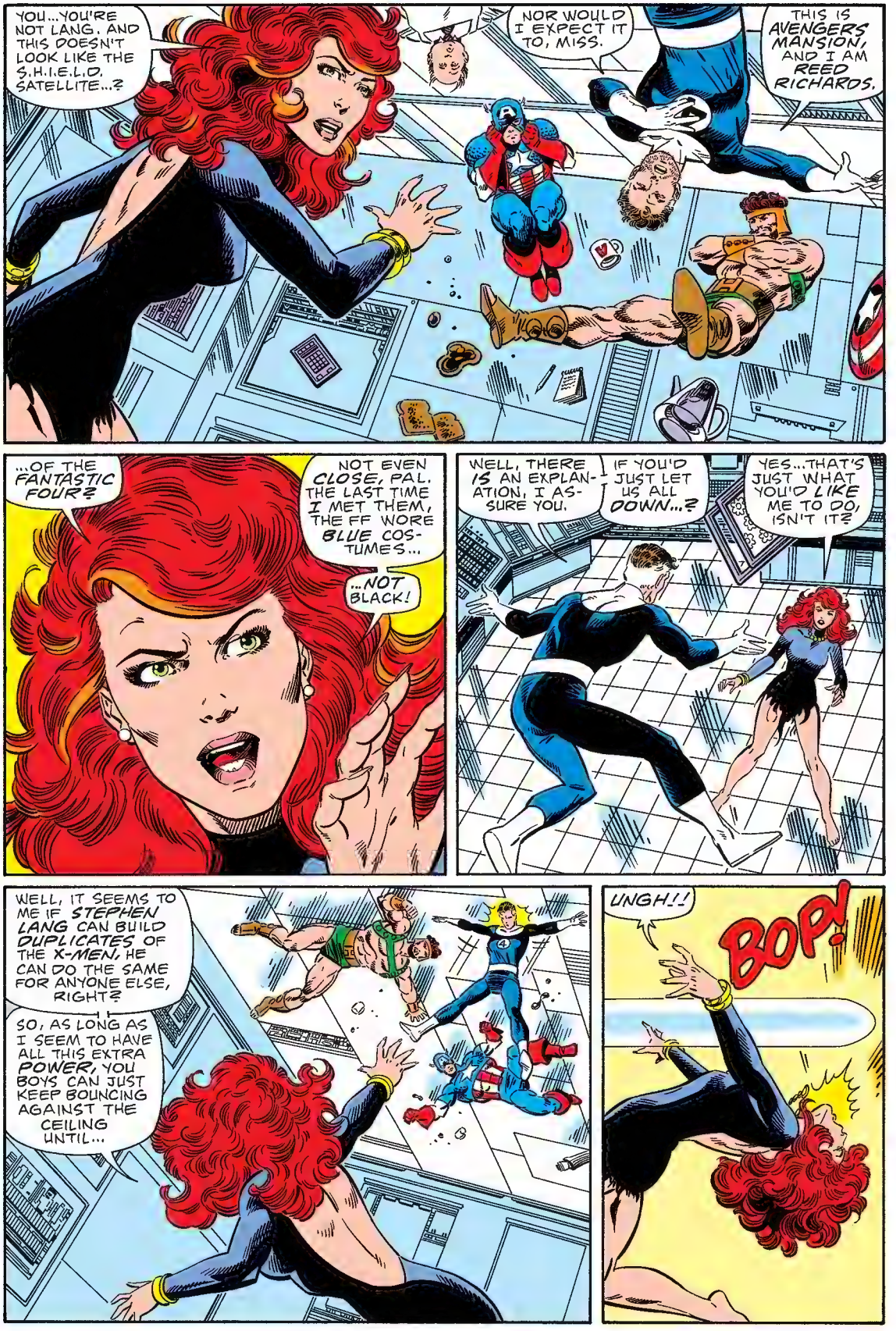

NOTHING FROM THIS WORLD, I SUSPECT.
SUE, YOUR POWERS INCLUDE THE ABILITY TO MAKE OBJECTS INVISIBLE.
LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN SHOW US THE INSIDE OF THAT THING.
ALL RIGHT...
BUT I DON'T GUARANTEE ANYTHING. THAT... OBJECT ALMOST LOOKS AS IF IT ISN'T REALLY THERE AT ALL!
THAT'S IT, SUE!
YOU'RE GETTING IT!
SOMETHING IS STARTING TO APPEAR...
BUT... I FEEL SOME KIND OF... FEEDBACK, AS IF THE OBJECT IS RESISTING MY PROBE.
TRY TO HOLD IT JUST A FEW SECONDS LONGER.
WE'VE ALMOST GOT A CLEAR VIEW OF THE INTERIOR OF THE...
GOOD LORD!!
IT'S... A WOMAN! A HUMAN WOMAN!!

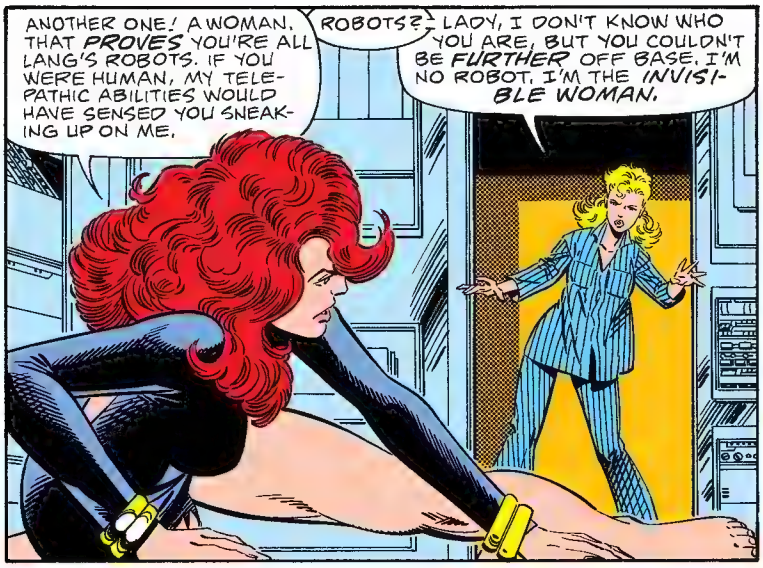
Oh-hhh!
SUE!!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, MY LOVE! YOU CAN RE-LAX NOW!
WE'VE SEEN WHAT WE NEEDED TO SEE.
BUT...WHO IS YON MAIDEN? IS SHE KNOWN TO ANY HERE?
NOT ME... BUT THEN I'M STILL NEW AT THIS.
SHE DID NOT LOOK AT ALL FAMILIAR TO ME, EITHER, SHE-HULK. CLEARLY, THIS WILL REQUIRE INTENSIVE RESEARCH.
HO, WHOA! MY BOREDOM-SENSE JUST WENT OFF! THIS IS THE PART WHERE YOU GET INCREDIBLY FOCUSED FOR ABOUT TWELVE DAYS...
...WHILE THE REST OF US STAND AROUND LIKE ZOMBIES, RIGHT?
WELL, I MIGHT HAVE CHOSEN A MORE...ENLIGHTENED PHRASEOLOGY, JOHNNY, BUT... YES, THAT IS ESSENTIALLY IT!
WELL, FINE. I'LL TAKE THAT AS MY CUE TO SKEEDADDLE OUT OF HERE. I'VE GOT A LOVELY LADY WAITING FOR ME, AND IT'S BEEN TOO LONG SINCE I'VE BEEN WITH HER.
YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME IF THE PLOT THICKENS.
YOU KNOW, THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD PLAN, TORCHIE. I COULD USE A LITTLE HEAVY-DUTY HOMECOMING WITH THE LOVE OF MY OWN LIFE.
HOW'S IT GOIN' WITH YOU AND MY OL' COLLEGE ROOMIE, SHULKIE? I THOUGHT YOU AND WYATT WERE A PRETTY HOT ITEM, BUT AFTER THAT LITTLE NUMBER WITH HERC...
SELF-DEFENSE, JOHNNY.
HERCULES HAS A TENDENCY TO PUT THE MAKE ON ANYTHING THAT HASN'T BEEN CREMATED.
I HAD TO COME UP WITH A LITTLE GAME PLAYING TO KEEP FROM GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT HIM.
ABOUT HERCULES? WHAT ARE YOU, INTO OLDER MEN OR SOMETHING?
WELL, THAT'S PART OF IT. I MEAN, THAT'S NOT SOME CIRCUS STRONG MAN WHO DECIDED TO CALL HIMSELF HERCULES. HE'S THE REAL HERCULES, FIVE THOUSAND YEARS OLD AND ALL!
THINK ABOUT IT, JOHNNY. THIS IS A MAN WHOSE NAME HAS BECAME AN ADJECTIVE, A PART OF THE LANGUAGE!
THAT'S A PRETTY TOUGH ACT FOR A GIRL TO WALK AWAY FROM.
AND ANYWAY ...MAYBE YOU DIDN'T NOTICE, BUT HE HAS EYES JUST LIKE TOM SELLECK.


GOOD MORNING, GENTLEMEN. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE READY FOR A PICK-ME-UP.
JARVIS! YOU'RE A LIFE-SAVER!
BUT...WHAT ARE YOU DOING STILL UP? EVEN THE AVENGERS BUTLER MUST NEED SOME REST!
ABOUT SIX HOURS A NIGHT, SIR.
WHICH I HAVE HAD, WHILE YOU'VE BEEN WORKING.
WHAT...?
GREAT DAY, LOOK AT THE TIME!
WE'VE BEEN AT IT EIGHT HOURS WITHOUT A BREAK!
TEK
AM 6:13
I TRUST YOU HAVE AT LEAST HAD A FRUITFUL NIGHT OF IT, MASTER REED?
WE'LL KNOW IN A FEW MINUTES, JARVIS.
WE'VE MANAGED TO LOCK ONTO A VERY SUBDUED BRAINWAVE PATTERN. WHOEVER THAT YOUNG LADY IS, SHE'S IN SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO SUSPENDED ANIMATION.
ONLY HER DEEPEST UNCONSCIOUS MIND IS EVEN SLIGHTLY ACTIVE, AND IT SEEMS TO BE THAT WHICH TRIGGERS THE DEFENSIVE ENERGIES OF THE...POD.
Ahh! THEN I TAKE IT YOU DO NOT FEEL THE YOUNG LADY HERSELF HAS SUPER-HUMAN POWERS?
I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW.
BUT THIS NEXT STEP INVOLVES A GENTLE BIO-RADIANT STIMULATION OF HER CONSCIOUS MIND.
HOPEFULLY WE CAN BRING HER OUT OF THE COMA-LIKE STATE, AND OUT OF THE POD...
I SEE, SIR. I...
...oh!
MASTER REED!!

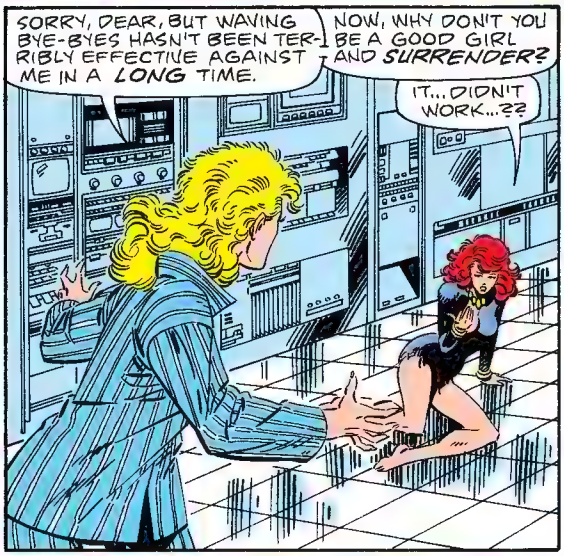

Mmmmmm...
REED...?
WHAT IN THE NAME OF...?
THE LAB! SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED WITH THAT...
HM?
Oh-ohhh!!
HOW IN THE WORLD CAN I COUNTER THIS?
I'VE GOT TO GET DOWNSTAIRS...
GOT TO REACH REED!
I NEVER EXPECTED THE POD'S DEFENSES TO BE THIS POWERFUL!
IT ISN'T THE POD THIS TIME... IT'S THE WOMAN INSIDE THE POD!
I GOT TO RELEASE HER!
I'VE GOT TO REACH THE CONTROL CONSOLE-- CUT IN THE HYPER-PHASE MODULATOR...
ZOUNDS! ART THOU MAD REED RICHARDS??

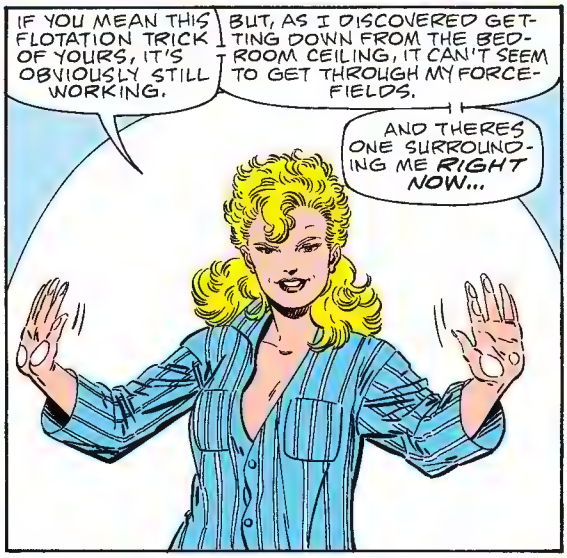
NOT AT ALL, HERCULES, JUST LOGICAL! CLEARLY JARVIS GUESSED CORRECTLY WHEN HE SUGGESTED THE WOMAN HERSELF MIGHT HAVE SUPERPOWERS.
NOW THAT THOSE POWERS ARE THEMSELVES FUNCTIONING THERE IS A GREAT DANGER THAT THE POD'S OWN DEFENSE MECHANISMS MAY TURN ON HER--DESTROYING HER! UNLESS WE RELEASE HER FIRST!
Oh, MY GOODNESS...
LOOK AT THE POD!!
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO IT?!
IT'S WORKING! IT SEEMS TO BE...
HATCHING!!!
YOUR ROTTEN LITTLE GAME IS FINISHED, LANG. YOUR SO-CALLED X-SENTINELS ARE FALLING APART.
NOW IT'S YOUR...
...TURN...?

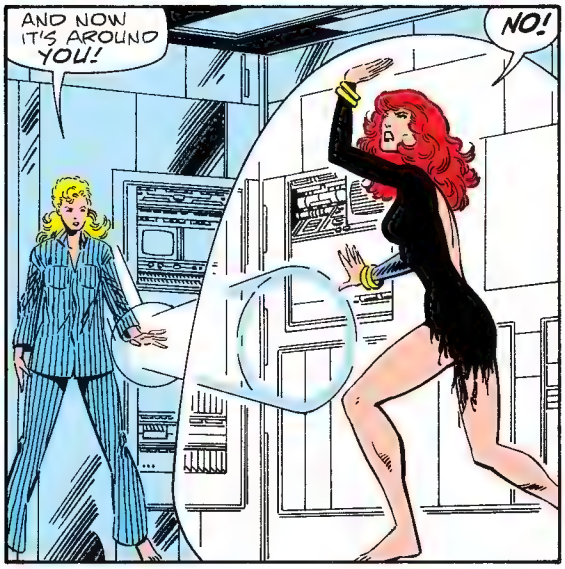

YOU...YOU'RE NOT LANG. AND THIS DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THE S.H.I.E.L.D. SATELLITE...?
NOR WOULD I EXPECT IT TO, MISS.
THIS IS AVENGERS MANSION, AND I AM REED RICHARDS.
...OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR?
NOT EVEN CLOSE, PAL. THE LAST TIME I MET THEM, THE FF WORE BLUE COSTUMES...
...NOT BLACK!
WELL, THERE IS AN EXPLANATION, I ASSURE YOU.
IF YOU'D JUST LET US ALL DOWN...?
YES...THAT'S JUST WHAT YOU'D LIKE ME TO DO, ISN'T IT?
WELL, IT SEEMS TO ME IF STEPHEN LANG CAN BUILD DUPLICATES OF THE X-MEN, HE CAN DO THE SAME FOR ANYONE ELSE, RIGHT?
SO, AS LONG AS I SEEM TO HAVE ALL THIS EXTRA POWER, YOU BOYS CAN JUST KEEP BOUNCING AGAINST THE CEILING UNTIL...
UNGH!!
BOP!

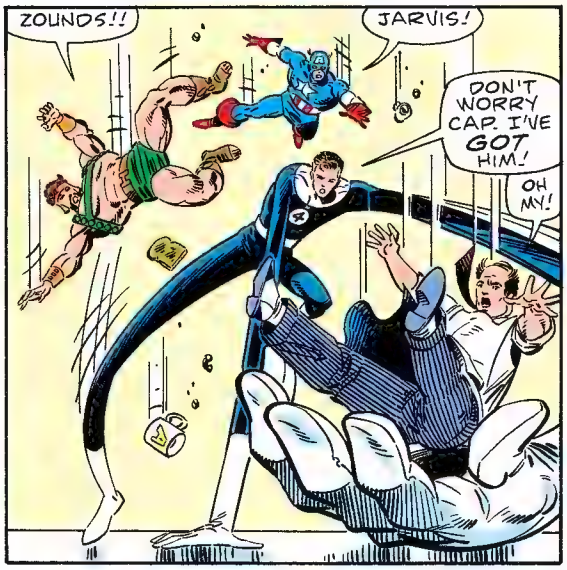

ANOTHER ONE! A WOMAN. THAT PROVES YOU'RE ALL LANG'S ROBOTS. IF YOU WERE HUMAN, MY TELEPATHIC ABILITIES WOULD HAVE SENSED YOU SNEAKING UP ON ME.
ROBOTS?
LADY, I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT YOU COULDN'T BE FURTHER OFF BASE. I'M NO ROBOT. I'M THE INVISIBLE WOMAN.

ANOTHER SLIGHT ERROR IN YOUR PROGRAMMING. THAT SHOULD BE INVISIBLE GIRL!
LANG'S GETTING SLOPPIER AND SLOPPIER. AND YOU-- YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET DISMANTLED.


SORRY, DEAR, BUT WAVING BYE-BYES HASN'T BEEN TERRIBLY EFFECTIVE AGAINST ME IN A LONG TIME.
NOW, WHY DON'T YOU BE A GOOD GIRL AND SURRENDER?
IT... DIDN'T WORK...??

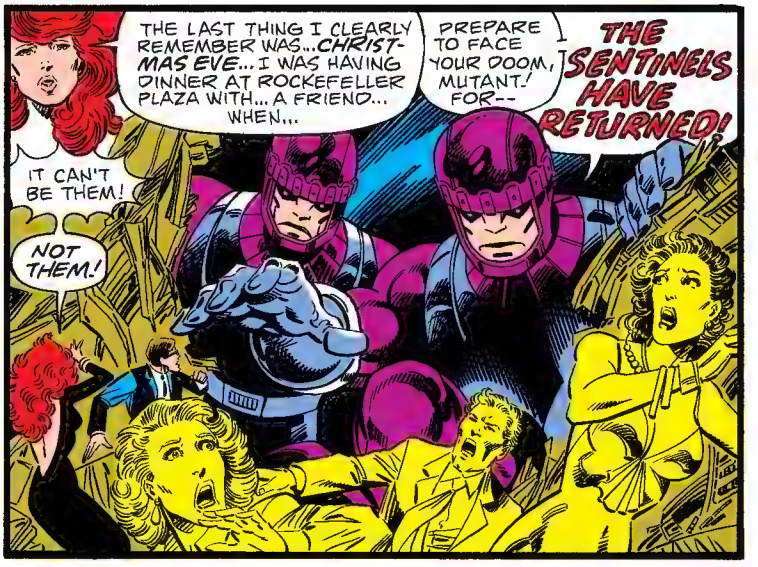

IF YOU MEAN THIS FLOTATION TRICK OF YOURS, IT'S OBVIOUSLY STILL WORKING.
BUT, AS I DISCOVERED GETTING DOWN FROM THE BEDROOM CEILING, IT CAN'T SEEM TO GET THROUGH MY FORCEFIELDS.
AND THERE'S ONE SURROUNDING ME RIGHT NOW...


AND NOW IT'S AROUND YOU!
NO!

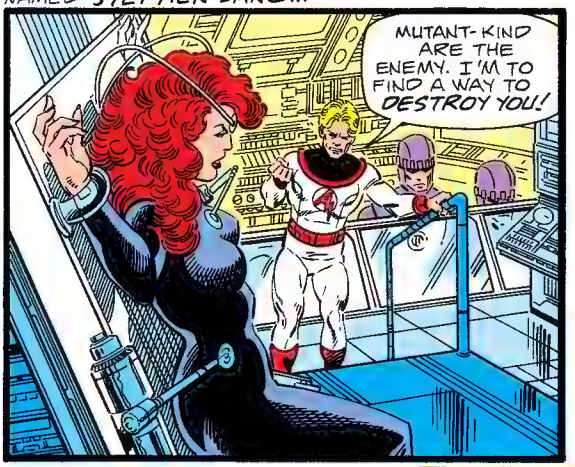

ZOUNDS!!
JARVIS!
DON'T WORRY CAP. I'VE GOT HIM!
OH MY!

OKAY, CREEPS. YOU'VE WON.
KILL ME.
GET IT OVER WITH.
BOY, I'VE SEEN PERSECUTION COMPLEXES IN MY DAY, BUT THIS LADY TAKES THE CAKE!
AND PERHAPS NOT WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION, SUE. A MOMENT WHILE I TURN OFF THE BIO-STIMULATOR...
NOW, LET'S SEE IF MY HUNCH IS CORRECT AS TO WHO OUR GUEST REALLY IS...
OF COURSE.
YOU'RE MARVEL GIRL, ARE YOU NOT?
WHY DO YOU INSIST ON CONTINUING THIS STUPID CHARADE?
WHAT DOES LANG HOPE TO GAIN FROM IT ALL?
DOES HE EXPECT ME TO GROVEL? TO BEG FOR MY LIFE?
WE'RE MADE OF TOUGHER STUFF THAN THAT IN THE X-MEN!
X-MEN? MARVEL GIRL? OF COURSE! BUT NO ONE'S SEEN OR HEARD ANYTHING OF HER IN... YEARS!
NOT SINCE SEVERAL CHRISTMAS EVES PAST.
AND THAT VERY PROBABLY ACCOUNTS, IN PART, FOR HER HOSTILITY.
SUE, DROP YOUR FIELD!
ART THOU MAD? IF SHE DOTH ATTACK AGAIN...
SHE WON'T. NOT IF WE CONVINCE HER THAT WE TRULY ARE WHO WE SAY WE ARE...
...BY PLACING OURSELVES COMPLETELY AT HER MERCY!
I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
IF YOU'RE REALLY THE FANTASTIC FOUR ...REALLY THE AVENGERS...
THEN...WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME? I FEEL SO...SO TIRED...
SO UTTERLY... DRAINED...

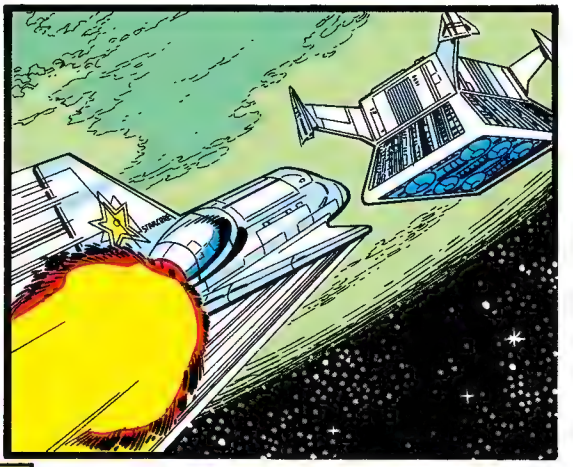
EASY, MISS, EASY! PERHAPS YOU SHOULD SIT DOWN. AND WOULD YOU CARE FOR SOME NICE HOT TEA?
AND WHO WOULDN'T BE? I HAVE THE AWFUL FEELING A GIGANTIC HOLE HAS JUST BEEN PUNCHED THROUGH MY LIFE.
YOU SEEM VERY... CONFUSED.

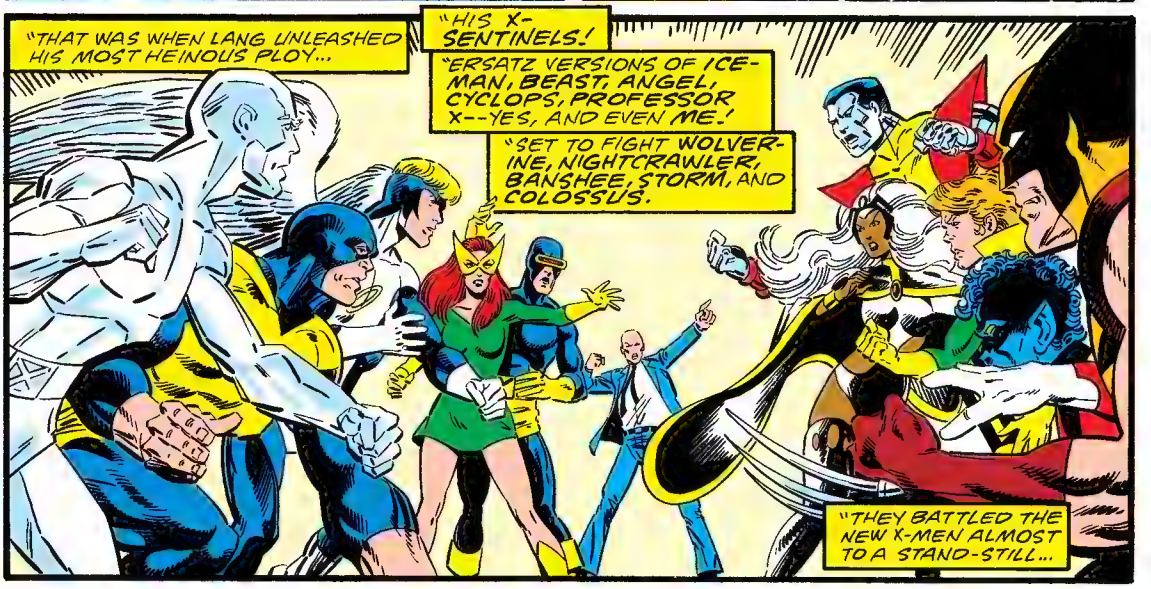

THE LAST THING I CLEARLY REMEMBER WAS...CHRISTMAS EVE... I WAS HAVING DINNER AT ROCKEFELLER PLAZA WITH... A FRIEND... WHEN...
PREPARE TO FACE YOUR DOOM, MUTANT! FOR--
THE SENTINELS HAVE RETURNED!
IT CAN'T BE THEM!
NOT THEM!

"WE'D BATTLED THOSE MUTANT-HUNTING ROBOTS BEFORE, BUT THIS TIME IT WAS **DIFFERENT**. THIS TIME THEY SEEMED TO BE PART OF A **GOVERNMENT-APPROVED** OPERATION, LEAD BY A MADMAN NAMED **STEPHEN LANG**..."



"LANG'S BASE WAS ABOARD S.H.I.E.L.D.'S GIANT ORBITAL PLATFORM. THE REST OF THE X-MEN VIRTUALLY **HI-JACKED A NASA** SHUTTLE TO ATTEMPT A RESCUE OF THOSE OF US WHO HAD BEEN CAPTURED.

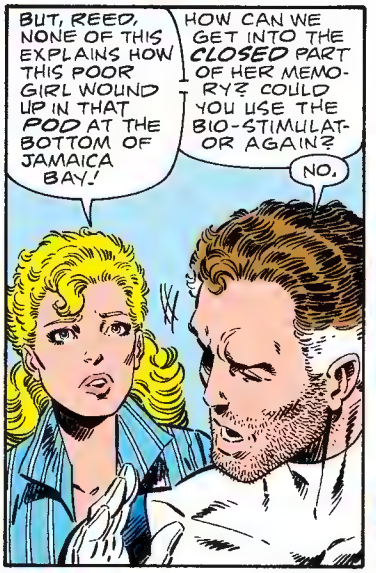


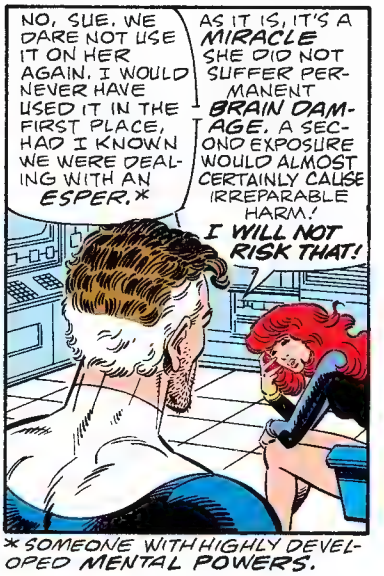

"THAT WAS WHEN LANG UNLEASHED HIS MOST HEINOUS PLOY...
"HIS X-SENTINELS!
"ERSATZ VERSIONS OF ICEMAN, BEAST, ANGEL, CYCLOPS, PROFESSOR X--YES, AND EVEN ME.!
"SET TO FIGHT WOLVERINE, NIGHTCRAWLER, BANSHEE, STORM, AND COLOSSUS.
"THEY BATTLED THE NEW X-MEN ALMOST TO A STAND-STILL...

"THEN, AT THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT BEFORE COMPLETE DEFEAT, THE TIDE WAS SUDDENLY, IRREVOCABLY TURNED.
"WOLVERINE, WHO SEEMS TO POSSESS SENSES HONED BEYOND ANY HUMAN LEVELS, GUESSED THE TRUE NATURE OF THE ATTACKERS.
"AND IN ONE TERRIBLE, BLINDING SLASH OF HIS INDESTRUCTABLE CLAWS, THAT NATURE LAY REVEALED."

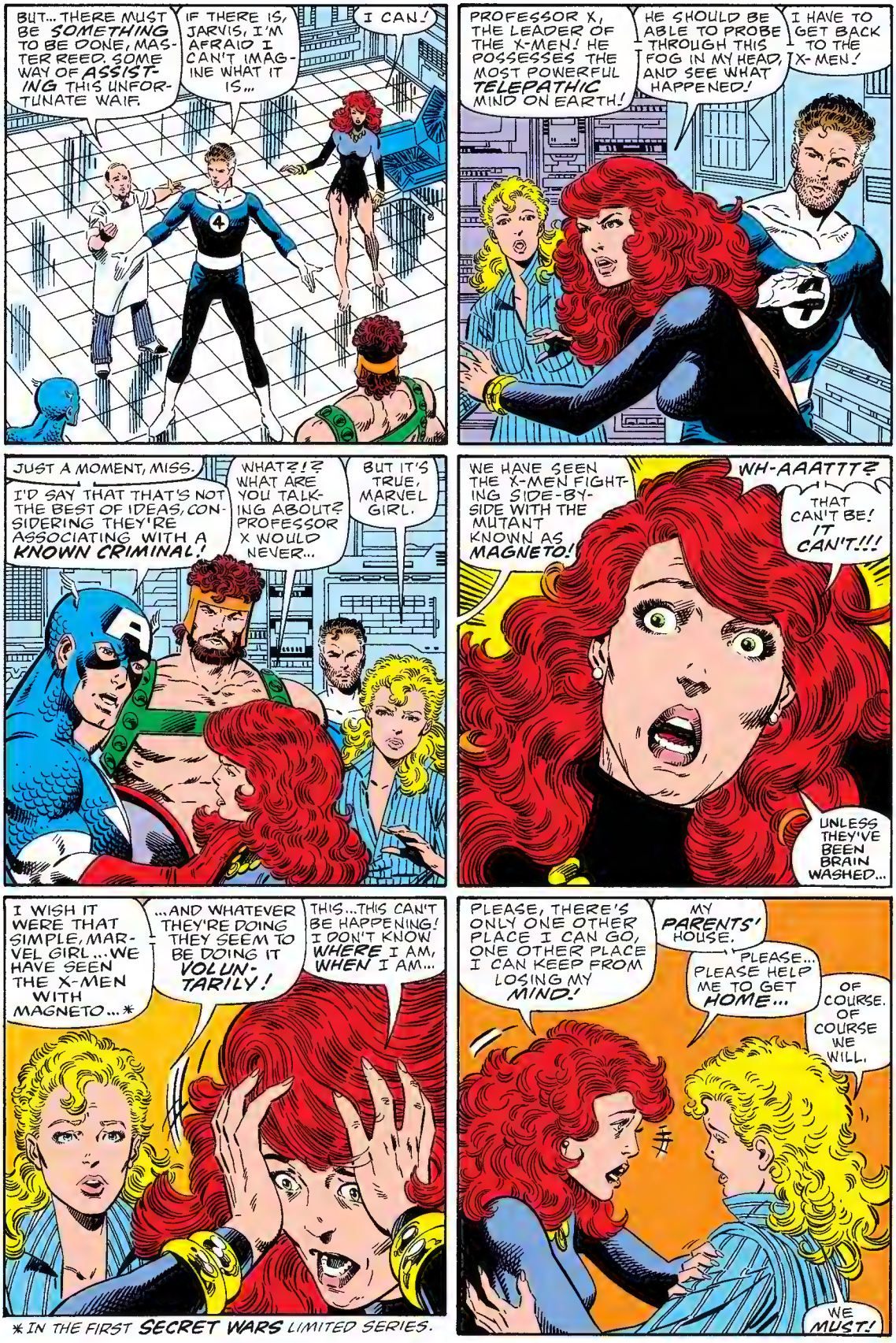
LANG'S SCHEME FELL APART, LIKE THE FRAGILE HOUSE OF CARDS IT TRULY WAS.
ONCE AGAIN THE X-MEN HAD TRIUMPHED OVER THE FORCES OF BIGOTRY AND PREJUDICE, FORCES THAT SOUGHT TO STAMP OUT THOSE OF US WHO ARE MUTANTS, BORN WITH SPECIAL EXTRA POWERS...
...SOUGHT TO OBLITERATE US FOR NO MORE REASON THAN THAT WE ARE DIFFERENT.
AND THEN... AND THEN... I KNOW SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENED AFTER WE BEAT LANG AND HIS SENTINELS. SOMETHING HORRIBLE.
SOMETHING THAT BURST ANY SENSE OF VICTORY WE MIGHT HAVE FELT. POPPED IT LIKE A SOAP BUBBLE.
BUT... I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS... I JUST CAN'T REMEMBER.

THAT STORY HAS A POWERFUL RING OF TRUTH. I REMEMBER WELL THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE SENTINELS ON THAT PARTICULAR CHRISTMAS EVE.
YES. AND I RECALL THE GOVERNMENT DISAVOWING KNOWLEDGE OR SUPPORT OF LANG'S "FINAL SOLUTION."

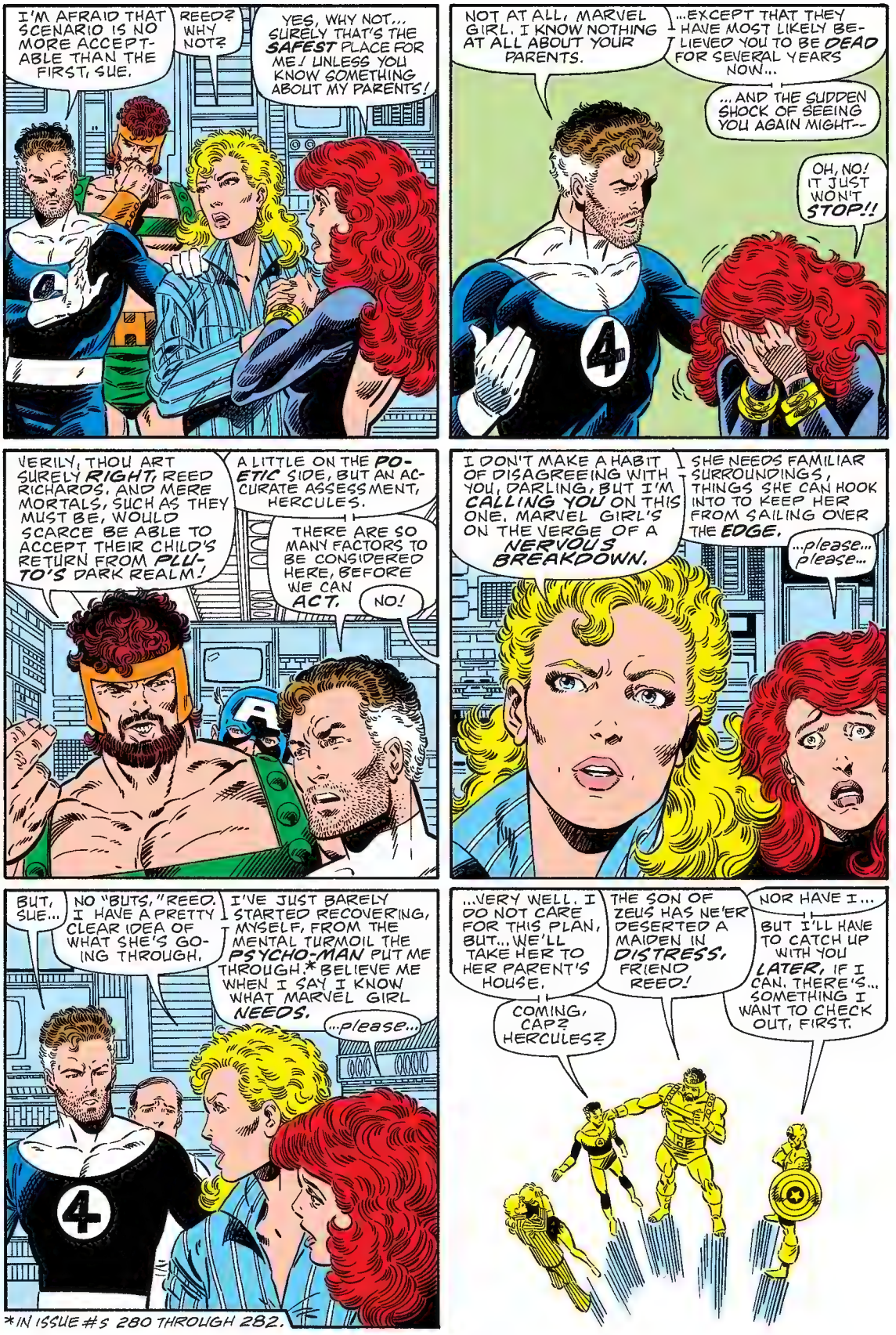

BUT, REED, NONE OF THIS EXPLAINS HOW THIS POOR GIRL WOUND UP IN THAT POD AT THE BOTTOM OF JAMAICA BAY!
HOW CAN WE GET INTO THE CLOSED PART OF HER MEMORY? COULD YOU USE THE BIO-STIMULATOR AGAIN?
NO,

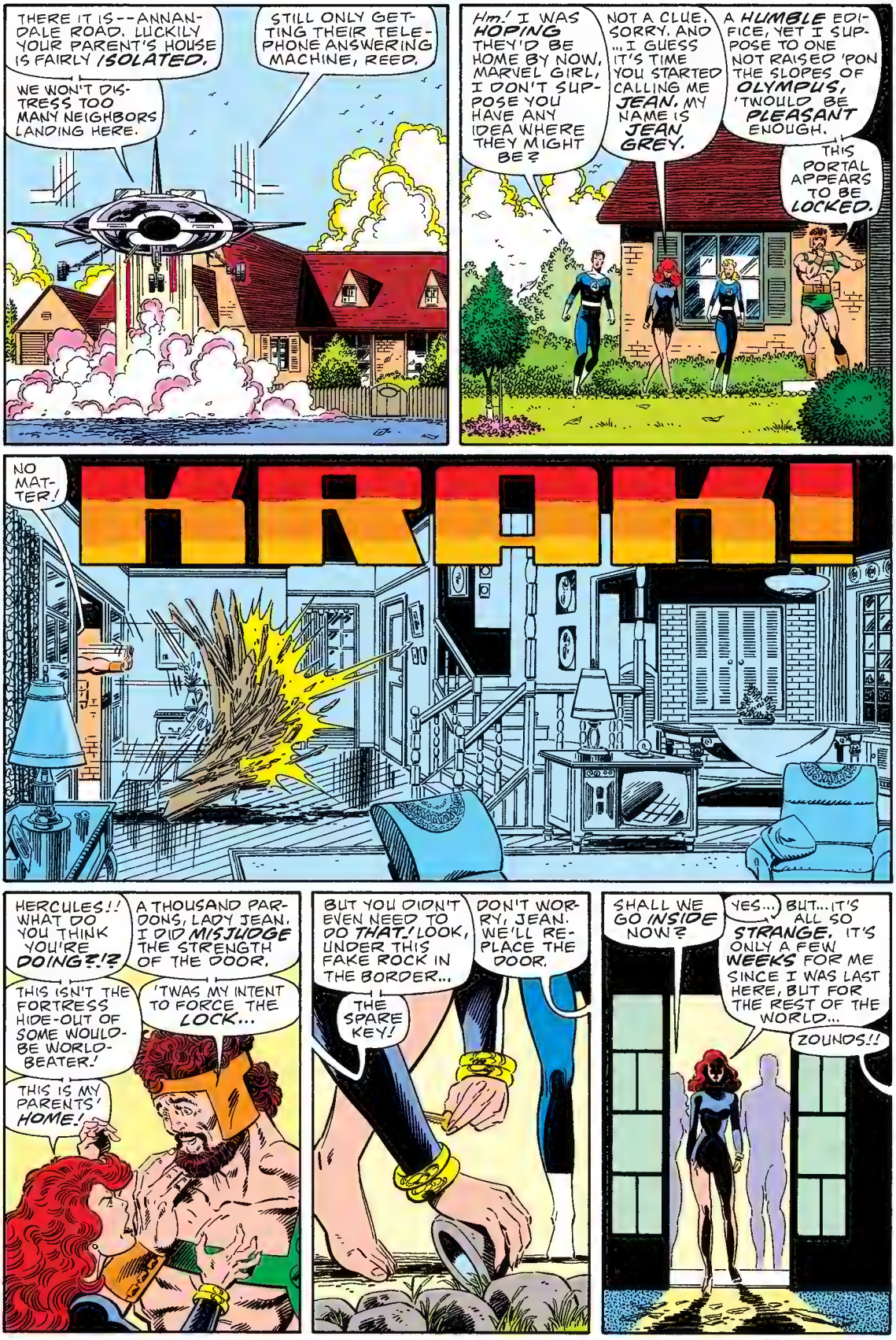

NO, SUE. WE DARE NOT USE IT ON HER AGAIN. I WOULD NEVER HAVE USED IT IN THE FIRST PLACE, HAD I KNOWN WE WERE DEALING WITH AN ESPER.*
AS IT IS, IT'S A MIRACLE SHE DID NOT SUFFER PERMANENT BRAIN DAMAGE. A SECOND EXPOSURE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY CAUSE IRREPARABLE HARM!
I WILL NOT RISK THAT!

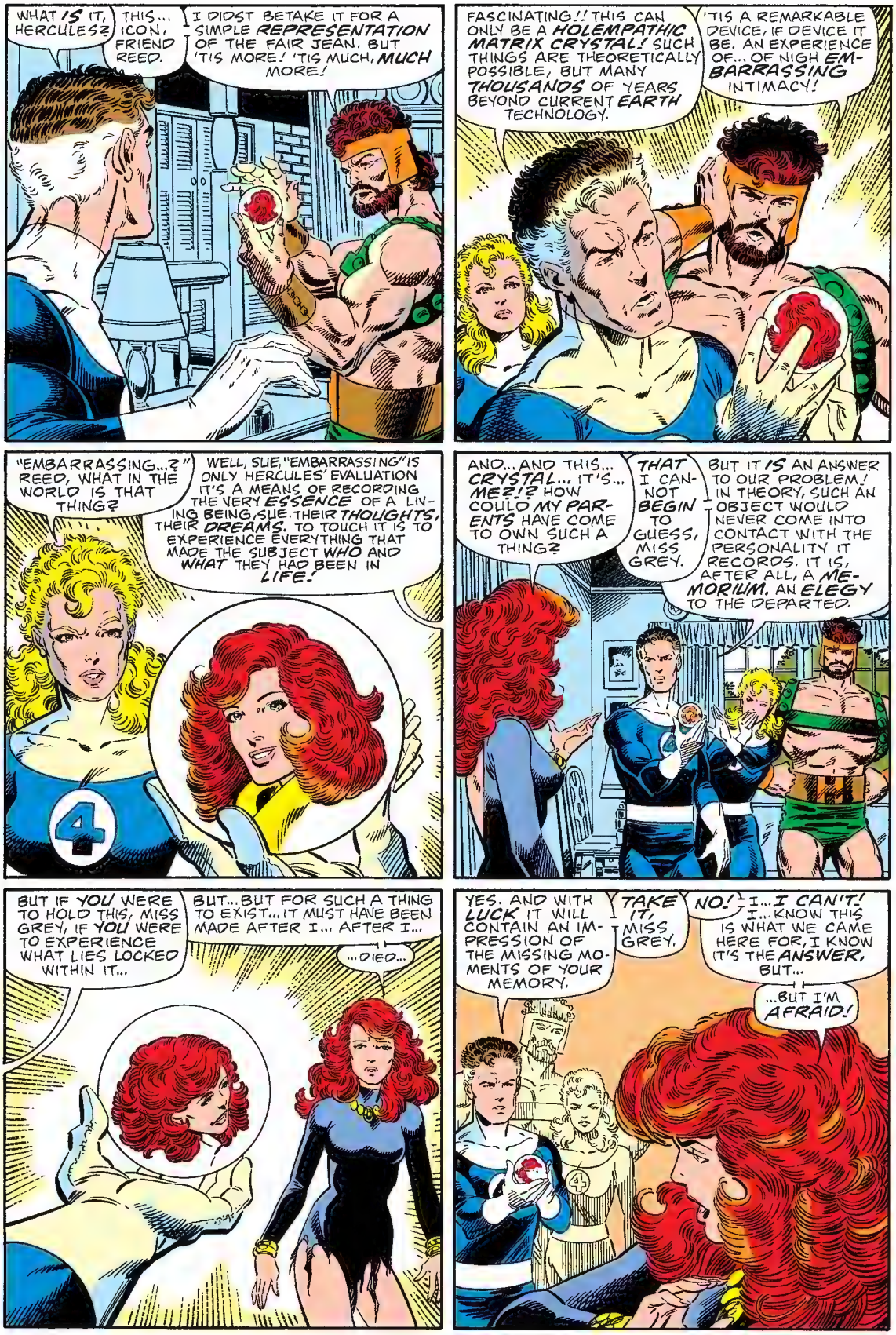
*SOMEONE WITH HIGHLY DEVELOPED MENTAL POWERS.

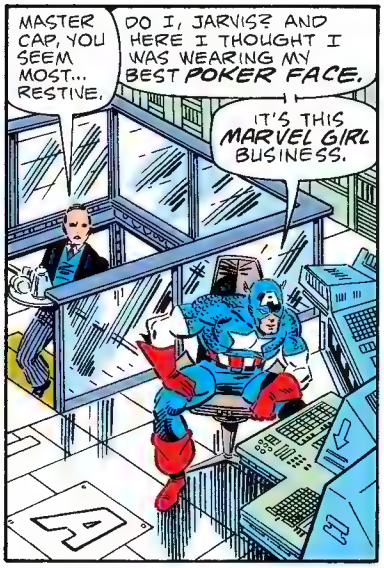

BUT... THERE MUST BE SOMETHING TO BE DONE, MASTER REED. SOME WAY OF ASSISTING THIS UNFORTUNATE WAIF.
IF THERE IS, JARVIS, I'M AFRAID I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT IT IS...
I CAN!
PROFESSOR X, THE LEADER OF THE X-MEN! HE POSSESSES THE MOST POWERFUL TELEPATHIC MIND ON EARTH!
HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROBE THROUGH THIS FOG IN MY HEAD, AND SEE WHAT HAPPENED!
I HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE X-MEN!
JUST A MOMENT, MISS.
I'D SAY THAT THAT'S NOT THE BEST OF IDEAS, CONSIDERING THEY'RE ASSOCIATING WITH A KNOWN CRIMINAL!
WHAT?! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? PROFESSOR X WOULD NEVER...
BUT IT'S TRUE, MARVEL GIRL.
WE HAVE SEEN THE X-MEN FIGHTING SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH THE MUTANT KNOWN AS MAGNETO!
WH-AAATTT?
THAT CAN'T BE! IT CAN'T!!!
UNLESS THEY'VE BEEN BRAIN WASHED...
I WISH IT WERE THAT SIMPLE, MARVEL GIRL... WE HAVE SEEN THE X-MEN WITH MAGNETO...*
...AND WHATEVER THEY'RE DOING THEY SEEM TO BE DOING IT VOLUNTARILY!
THIS...THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING! I DON'T KNOW WHERE I AM, WHEN I AM...
PLEASE, THERE'S ONLY ONE OTHER PLACE I CAN GO, ONE OTHER PLACE I CAN KEEP FROM LOSING MY MIND!
MY PARENTS' HOUSE.
PLEASE... PLEASE HELP ME TO GET HOME...
OF COURSE. OF COURSE WE WILL.
WE MUST!

*IN THE FIRST **SECRET WARS** LIMITED SERIES.


I'M AFRAID THAT SCENARIO IS NO MORE ACCEPTABLE THAN THE FIRST, SUE.
REED? WHY NOT?
YES, WHY NOT... SURELY THAT'S THE SAFEST PLACE FOR ME! UNLESS YOU KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT MY PARENTS!
NOT AT ALL, MARVEL GIRL. I KNOW NOTHING AT ALL ABOUT YOUR PARENTS.
...EXCEPT THAT THEY HAVE MOST LIKELY BELIEVED YOU TO BE DEAD FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW...
...AND THE SUDDEN SHOCK OF SEEING YOU AGAIN MIGHT--
OH, NO! IT JUST WON'T STOP!!
VERILY, THOU ART SURELY RIGHT, REED RICHARDS, AND MERE MORTALS, SUCH AS THEY MUST BE, WOULD SCARCE BE ABLE TO ACCEPT THEIR CHILD'S RETURN FROM PLUTO'S DARK REALM!
A LITTLE ON THE POETIC SIDE, BUT AN ACCURATE ASSESSMENT, HERCULES.
THERE ARE SO MANY FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED HERE, BEFORE WE CAN ACT.
NO!
I DON'T MAKE A HABIT OF DISAGREEING WITH YOU, DARLING, BUT I'M CALLING YOU ON THIS ONE. MARVEL GIRL'S ON THE VERGE OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN.
SHE NEEDS FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS, THINGS SHE CAN HOOK INTO TO KEEP HER FROM SAILING OVER THE EDGE.
...please... please...
BUT, SUE...
NO "BUTS," REED. I HAVE A PRETTY CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT SHE'S GOING THROUGH.
I'VE JUST BARELY STARTED RECOVERING, MYSELF, FROM THE MENTAL TURMOIL THE PSYCHO-MAN PUT ME THROUGH.* BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY I KNOW WHAT MARVEL GIRL NEEDS.
...please...
*IN ISSUE #S 280 THROUGH 282.
...VERY WELL. I DO NOT CARE FOR THIS PLAN, BUT... WE'LL TAKE HER TO HER PARENT'S HOUSE.
THE SON OF ZEUS HAS NE'ER DESERTED A MAIDEN IN DISTRESS, FRIEND REED!
NOR HAVE I...
BUT I'LL HAVE TO CATCH UP WITH YOU LATER, IF I CAN. THERE'S... SOMETHING I WANT TO CHECK OUT, FIRST.
COMING, CAP? HERCULES?

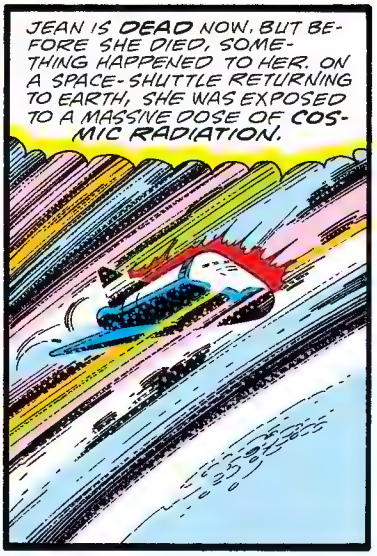

THERE IT IS--ANNANDALE ROAD. LUCKILY YOUR PARENT'S HOUSE IS FAIRLY ISOLATED.
WE WON'T DISTRESS TOO MANY NEIGHBORS LANDING HERE.
STILL ONLY GETTING THEIR TELEPHONE ANSWERING MACHINE, REED.
Hm.! I WAS HOPING THEY'D BE HOME BY NOW, MARVEL GIRL, I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE THEY MIGHT BE?
NOT A CLUE, SORRY. AND ...I GUESS IT'S TIME YOU STARTED CALLING ME JEAN. MY NAME IS JEAN GREY.
A HUMBLE EDIFICE, YET I SUPPOSE TO ONE NOT RAISED 'PON THE SLOPES OF OLYMPUS, 'TWOULD BE PLEASANT ENOUGH.
THIS PORTAL APPEARS TO BE LOCKED.
NO MATTER!
KRAK!
HERCULES!! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!?
A THOUSAND PARDONS, LADY JEAN. I DID MISJUDGE THE STRENGTH OF THE DOOR.
THIS ISN'T THE FORTRESS HIDE-OUT OF SOME WOULD-BE WORLD-BEATER!
'TWAS MY INTENT TO FORCE THE LOCK...
THIS IS MY PARENTS' HOME!
BUT YOU DIDN'T EVEN NEED TO DO THAT! LOOK, UNDER THIS FAKE ROCK IN THE BORDER...
DON'T WORRY, JEAN. WE'LL REPLACE THE DOOR.
THE SPARE KEY!
SHALL WE GO INSIDE NOW?
YES... BUT...IT'S ALL SO STRANGE. IT'S ONLY A FEW WEEKS FOR ME SINCE I WAS LAST HERE, BUT FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD...
ZOUNDS!!

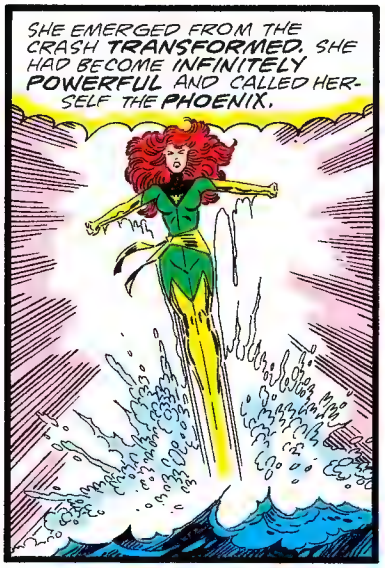

WHAT IS IT, HERCULES?
THIS... ICON, FRIEND REED.
I DIDST BETAKE IT FOR A SIMPLE REPRESENTATION OF THE FAIR JEAN. BUT 'TIS MORE! 'TIS MUCH, MUCH MORE!
FASCINATING!! THIS CAN ONLY BE A HOLEMPATHIC MATRIX CRYSTAL! SUCH THINGS ARE THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE, BUT MANY THOUSANDS OF YEARS BEYOND CURRENT EARTH TECHNOLOGY.
'TIS A REMARKABLE DEVICE, IF DEVICE IT BE. AN EXPERIENCE OF... OF NIGH EMBARRASSING INTIMACY!
"EMBARRASSING...?" REED, WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THAT THING?
WELL, SUE, "EMBARRASSING" IS ONLY HERCULES' EVALUATION IT'S A MEANS OF RECORDING THE VERY ESSENCE OF A LIVING BEING, SUE. THEIR THOUGHTS, THEIR DREAMS. TO TOUCH IT IS TO EXPERIENCE EVERYTHING THAT MADE THE SUBJECT WHO AND WHAT THEY HAD BEEN IN LIFE!
AND... AND THIS... CRYSTAL... IT'S... ME?! HOW COULD MY PARENTS HAVE COME TO OWN SUCH A THING?
THAT I CANNOT BEGIN TO GUESS, MISS GREY.
BUT IT IS AN ANSWER TO OUR PROBLEM! IN THEORY, SUCH AN OBJECT WOULD NEVER COME INTO CONTACT WITH THE PERSONALITY IT RECORDS. IT IS, AFTER ALL, A MEMORIUM, AN ELEGY TO THE DEPARTED.
BUT IF YOU WERE TO HOLD THIS, MISS GREY, IF YOU WERE TO EXPERIENCE WHAT LIES LOCKED WITHIN IT...
BUT... BUT FOR SUCH A THING TO EXIST... IT MUST HAVE BEEN MADE AFTER I... AFTER I...
...DIED...
YES. AND WITH LUCK IT WILL CONTAIN AN IMPRESSION OF THE MISSING MOMENTS OF YOUR MEMORY.
TAKE IT, MISS GREY.
NO! I... I CAN'T! I... KNOW THIS IS WHAT WE CAME HERE FOR, I KNOW IT'S THE ANSWER, BUT...
...BUT I'M AFRAID!


MASTER CAP, YOU SEEM MOST... RESTIVE.
DO I, JARVIS? AND HERE I THOUGHT I WAS WEARING MY BEST POKER FACE.
IT'S THIS MARVEL GIRL BUSINESS.

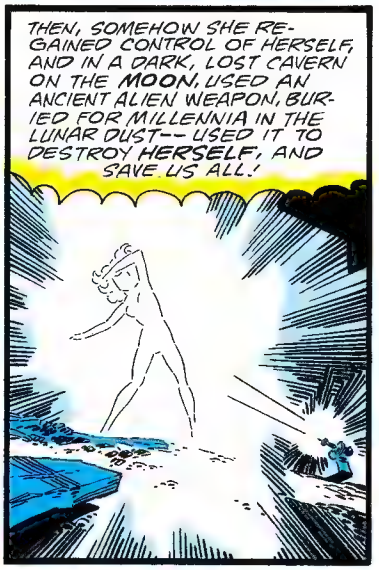
I'VE BEEN RE-CHECKING ALL OUR DATA ON HER. SOME-THING KEEPS PINGING AWAY AT MY OLD BATTLE-SENSE.
SHE SEEMED HARMLESS ENOUGH, ONCE SHE CALMED DOWN. HAVE YOU CROSS-REFERENCED HER FILE WITH ANYONE ELSE'S?

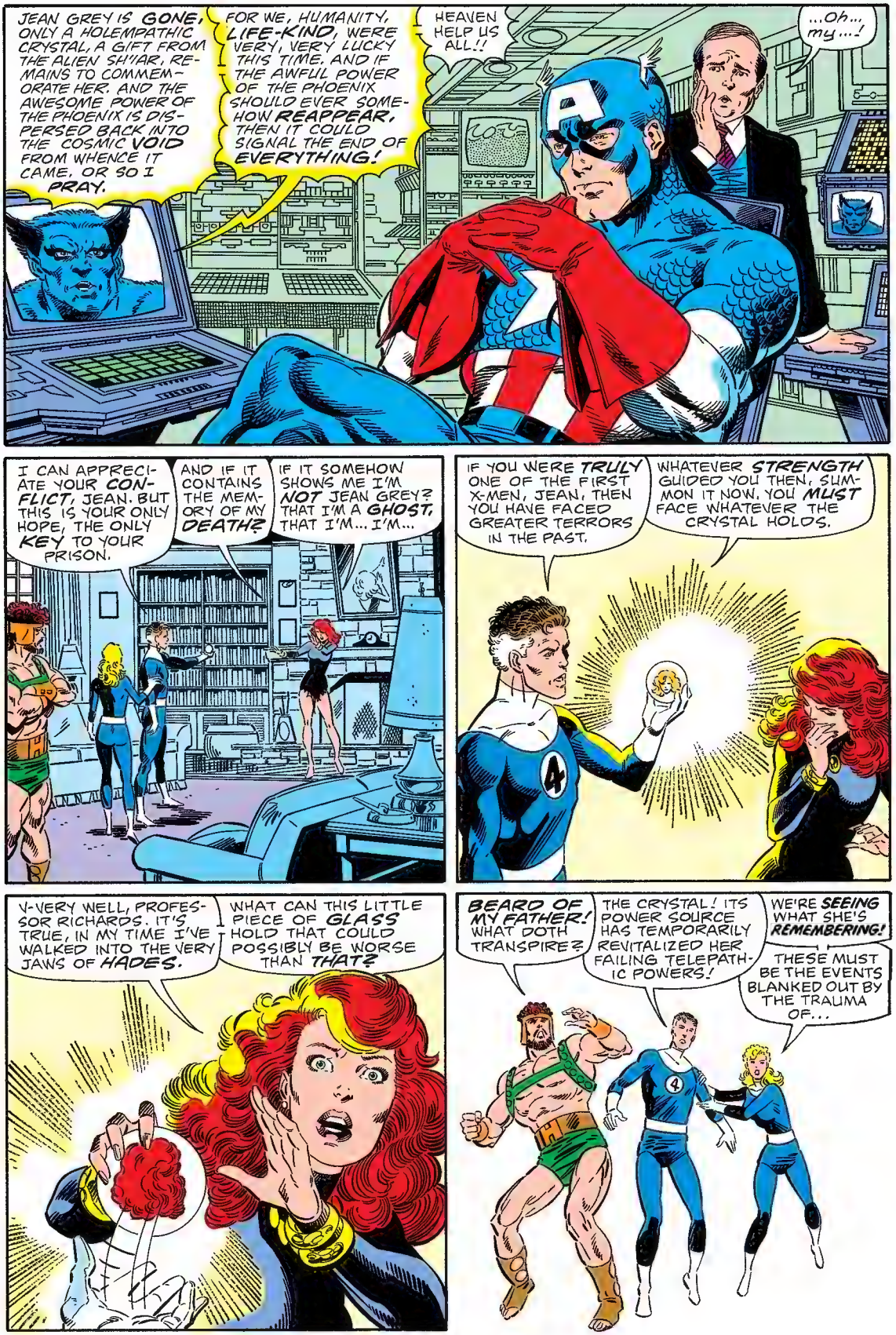
*THE BEAST SHOWN HERE BE-FORE HE MUTATED FULLY TO HIS FURRED STATE.

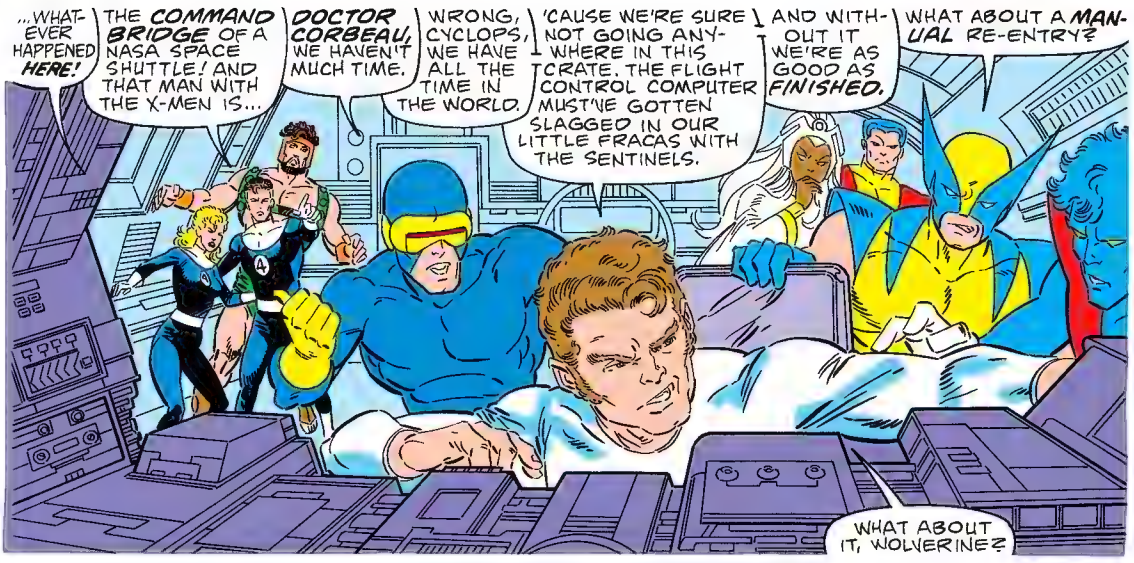

JEAN IS DEAD NOW, BUT BE-FORE SHE DIED, SOME-THING HAPPENED TO HER. ON A SPACE-SHUTTLE RETURNING TO EARTH, SHE WAS EXPOSED TO A MASSIVE DOSE OF COS-MIC RADIATION.



SOMETHING IN THAT TERRIBLE POWER CORRUPTED JEAN. SHE SEEMINGLY BECAME TOTALLY EVIL, SHE THREATENED TO DESTROY THE WORLD, PERHAPS THE UNIVERSE ITSELF!

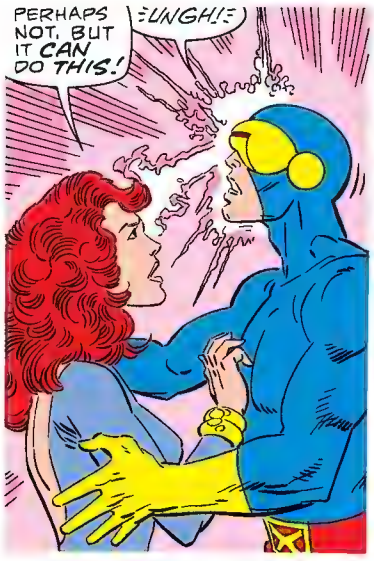

THEN, SOMEHOW SHE RE-GAINED CONTROL OF HERSELF, AND IN A DARK, LOST CAVERN ON THE MOON, USED AN ANCIENT ALIEN WEAPON, BUR-IED FOR MILLENNIA IN THE LUNAR DUST-- USED IT TO DESTROY HERSELF, AND SAVE US ALL.

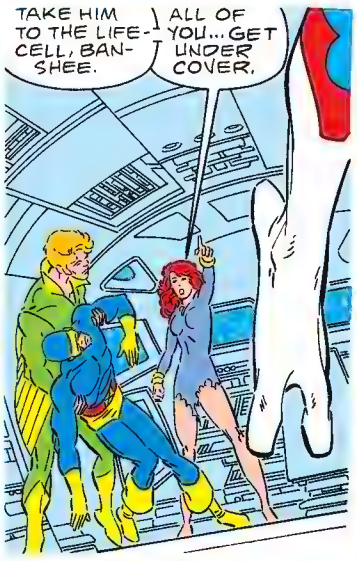

JEAN GREY IS GONE, ONLY A HOLEMPATHIC CRYSTAL, A GIFT FROM THE ALIEN SH'IAR, REMAINS TO COMMEMORATE HER. AND THE AWESOME POWER OF THE PHOENIX IS DISPERSED BACK INTO THE COSMIC VOID FROM WHENCE IT CAME, OR SO I PRAY.
FOR WE, HUMANITY, LIFE-KIND, WERE VERY, VERY LUCKY THIS TIME. AND IF THE AWFUL POWER OF THE PHOENIX SHOULD EVER SOMEHOW REAPPEAR, THEN IT COULD SIGNAL THE END OF EVERYTHING!
HEAVEN HELP US ALL!!
...Oh... my...!
I CAN APPRECIATE YOUR CONFLICT, JEAN. BUT THIS IS YOUR ONLY HOPE, THE ONLY KEY TO YOUR PRISON.
AND IF IT CONTAINS THE MEMORY OF MY DEATH?
IF IT SOMEHOW SHOWS ME I'M NOT JEAN GREY? THAT I'M A GHOST, THAT I'M... I'M...
IF YOU WERE TRULY ONE OF THE FIRST X-MEN, JEAN, THEN YOU HAVE FACED GREATER TERRORS IN THE PAST.
WHATEVER STRENGTH GUIDED YOU THEN, SUMMON IT NOW. YOU MUST FACE WHATEVER THE CRYSTAL HOLDS.
V-VERY WELL, PROFESSOR RICHARDS. IT'S TRUE, IN MY TIME I'VE WALKED INTO THE VERY JAWS OF HADES.
WHAT CAN THIS LITTLE PIECE OF GLASS HOLD THAT COULD POSSIBLY BE WORSE THAN THAT?
BEARD OF MY FATHER! WHAT DOTH TRANSPIRE?
THE CRYSTAL! ITS POWER SOURCE HAS TEMPORARILY REVITALIZED HER FAILING TELEPATHIC POWERS!
WE'RE SEEING WHAT SHE'S REMEMBERING!
THESE MUST BE THE EVENTS BLANKED OUT BY THE TRAUMA OF...


...WHATEVER HAPPENED HERE!
THE COMMAND BRIDGE OF A NASA SPACE SHUTTLE! AND THAT MAN WITH THE X-MEN IS...
DOCTOR CORBEAU, WE HAVEN'T MUCH TIME.
WRONG, CYCLOPS, WE HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD.
'CAUSE WE'RE SURE NOT GOING ANYWHERE IN THIS CRATE. THE FLIGHT CONTROL COMPUTER MUST'VE GOTTEN SLAGGED IN OUR LITTLE FRACAS WITH THE SENTINELS.
AND WITHOUT IT WE'RE AS GOOD AS FINISHED.
WHAT ABOUT A MANUAL RE-ENTRY?
WHAT ABOUT IT, WOLVERINE?

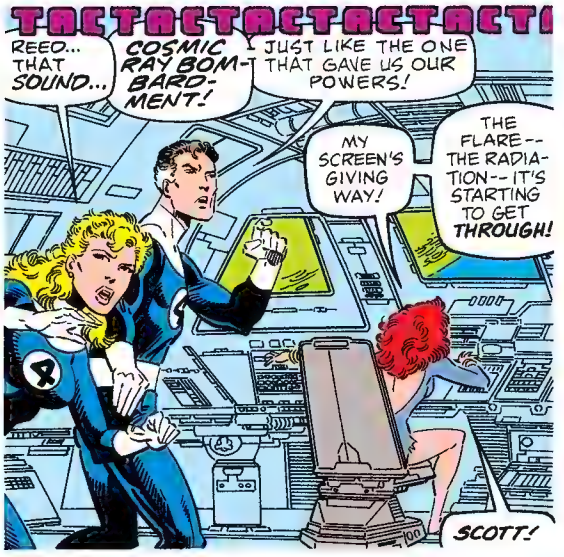
SURE, I CAN FLY A RE-ENTRY, NO SWEAT. BUT IT'D HAVE TO BE THROUGH THE WORST SOLAR FLARE IN YEARS.
WRONG, DR. CORBEAU. I CAN DO BOTH.
ARE YOU CRAZY, JEAN? SINCE WHEN ARE YOU A QUALIFIED ASTRONAUT?
AND NO ONE CAN PILOT THIS SHUTTLE AND SURVIVE THE FLARE.

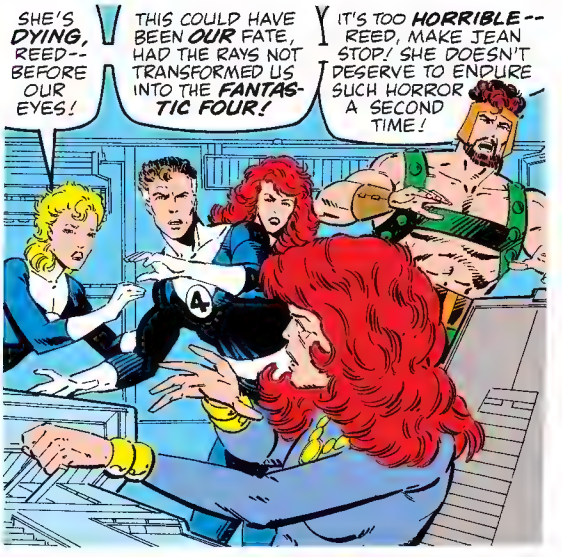
SINCE I'M A TELEPATH, I CAN ABSORB ALL OR. CORBEAU KNOWS ABOUT FLYING THE SPACE-SHUTTLE.
NOW, SCOTT.
AND MY TELEKINETIC POWERS WILL KEEP OUT THE RADIATION.
FOR HOW LONG? EVEN YOUR POWER CAN'T HANDLE THAT MUCH.

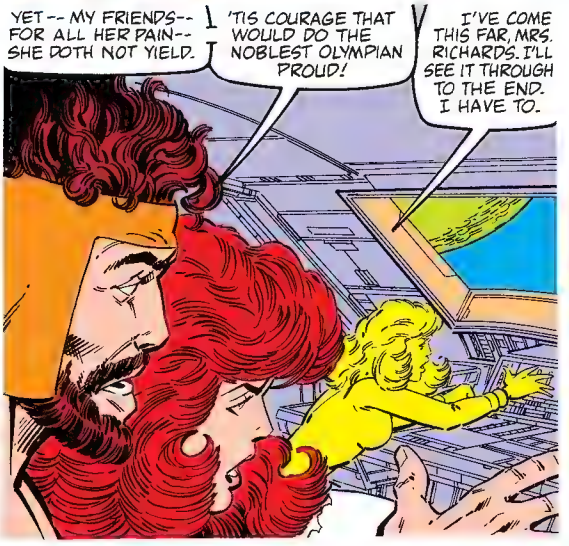

PERHAPS NOT, BUT IT CAN DO THIS!
=UNGH!=

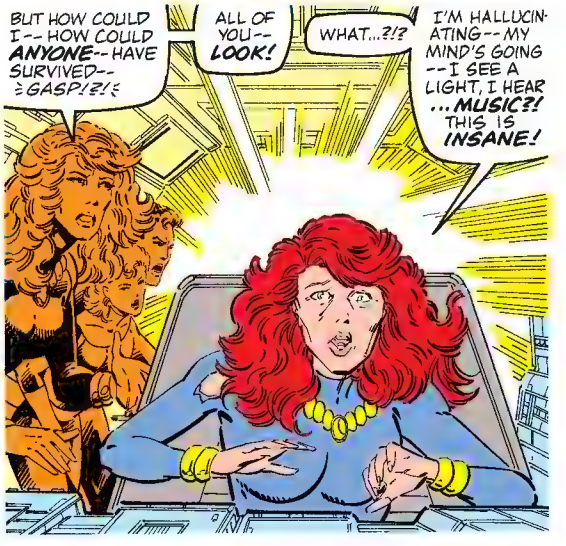

TAKE HIM TO THE LIFE-CELL, BANSHEE.
ALL OF YOU... GET UNDER COVER.

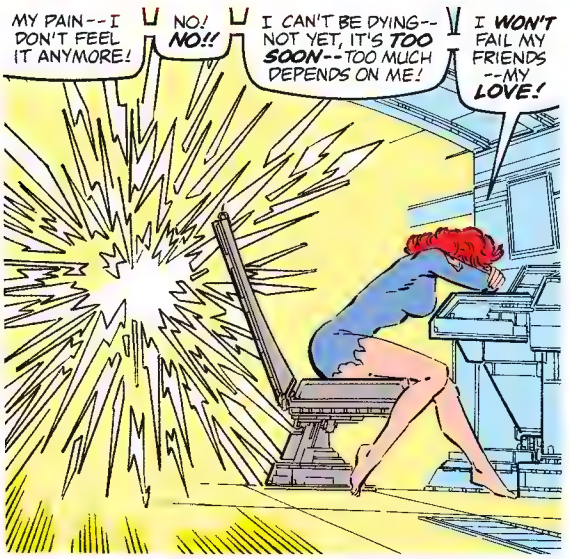
TWENTY-SEVEN MINUTES TO EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE.
NOT LONG AT ALL.
JUST THE REST OF MY LIFE!
STARCORE

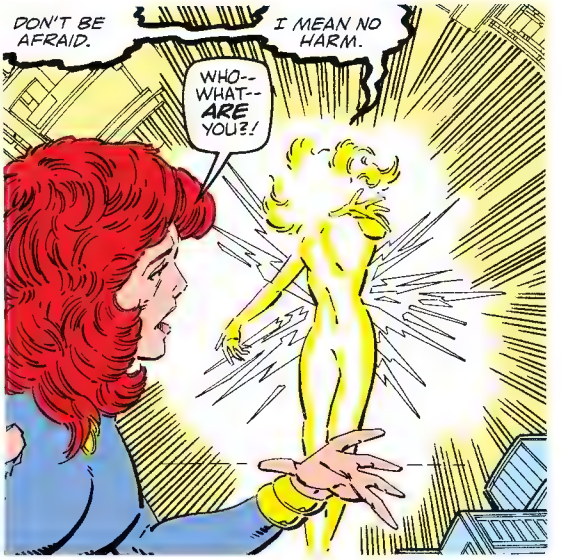

TACTACTACTACTACT!
REED... THAT SOUND...
COSMIC RAY BOM-BARD-MENT!
JUST LIKE THE ONE THAT GAVE US OUR POWERS!
MY SCREEN'S GIVING WAY!
THE FLARE-- THE RADIA-TION-- IT'S STARTING TO GET THROUGH!
SCOTT!

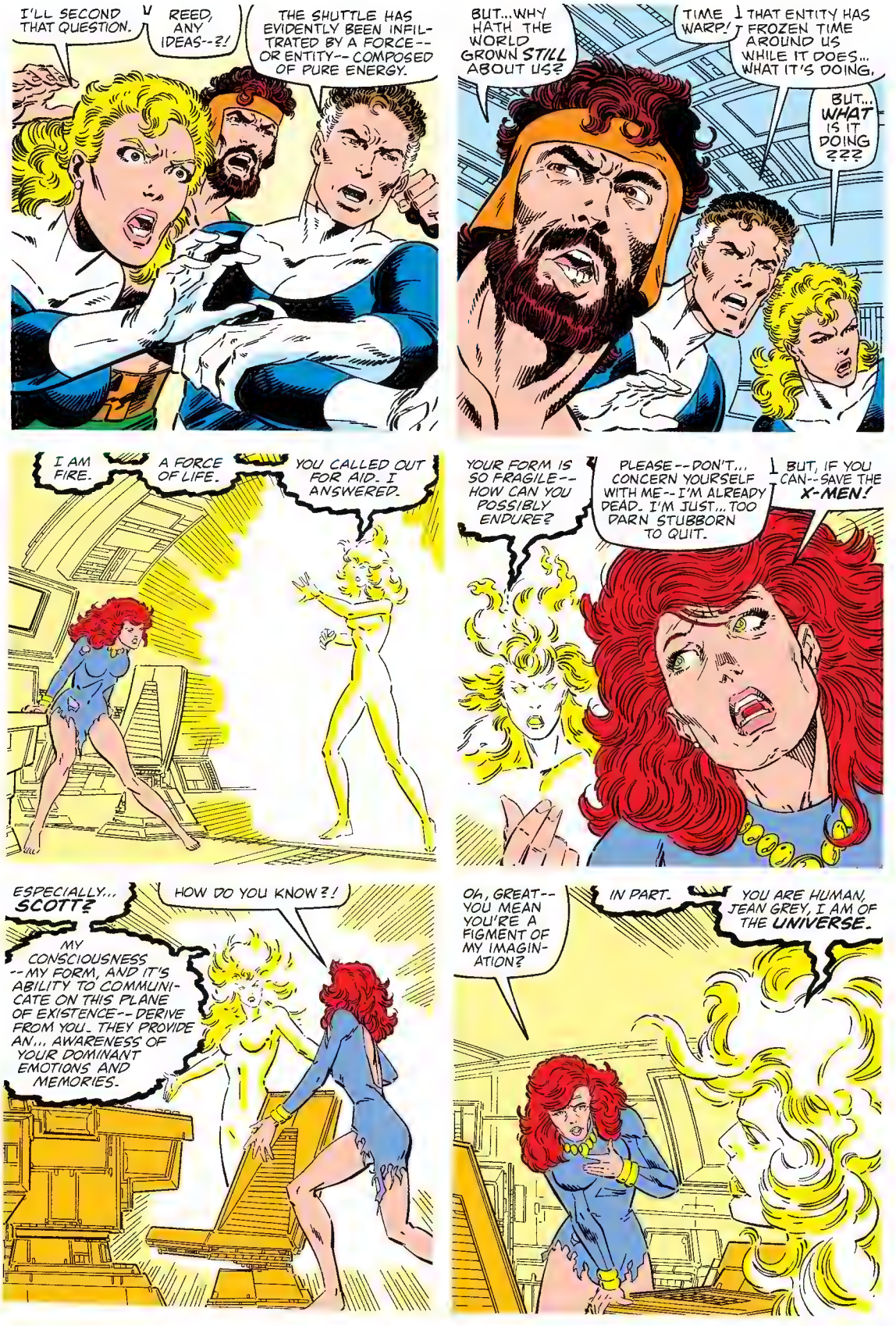

SHE'S DYING, REED-- BEFORE OUR EYES!
THIS COULD HAVE BEEN OUR FATE, HAD THE RAYS NOT TRANSFORMED US INTO THE FANTAS-TIC FOUR!
IT'S TOO HORRIBLE-- REED, MAKE JEAN STOP! SHE DOESN'T DESERVE TO ENDURE SUCH HORROR A SECOND TIME!

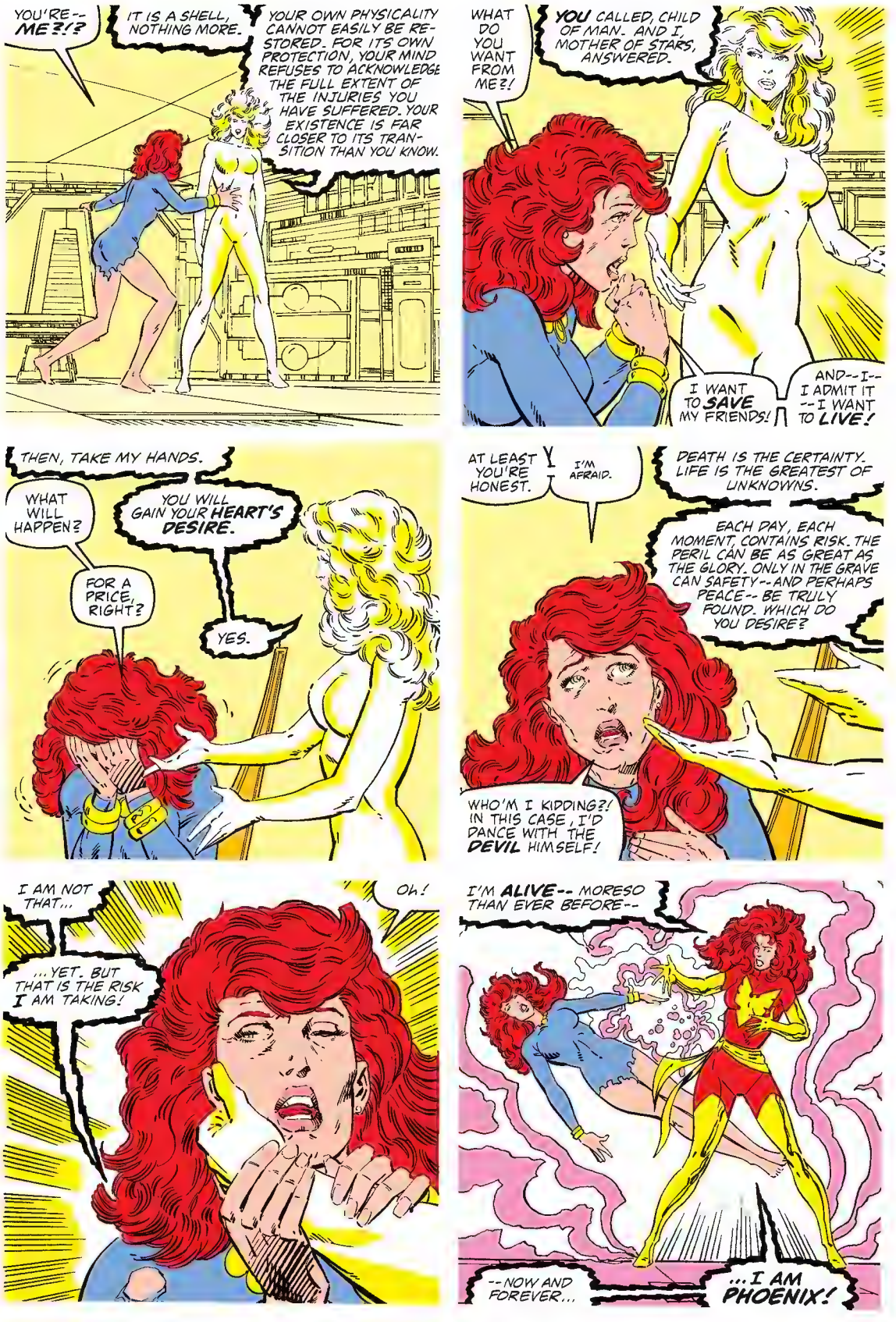

YET-- MY FRIENDS-- FOR ALL HER PAIN-- SHE DOTH NOT YIELD.
'TIS COURAGE THAT WOULD DO THE NOBLEST OLYMPIAN PROUD!
I'VE COME THIS FAR, MRS. RICHARDS. I'LL SEE IT THROUGH TO THE END. I HAVE TO.

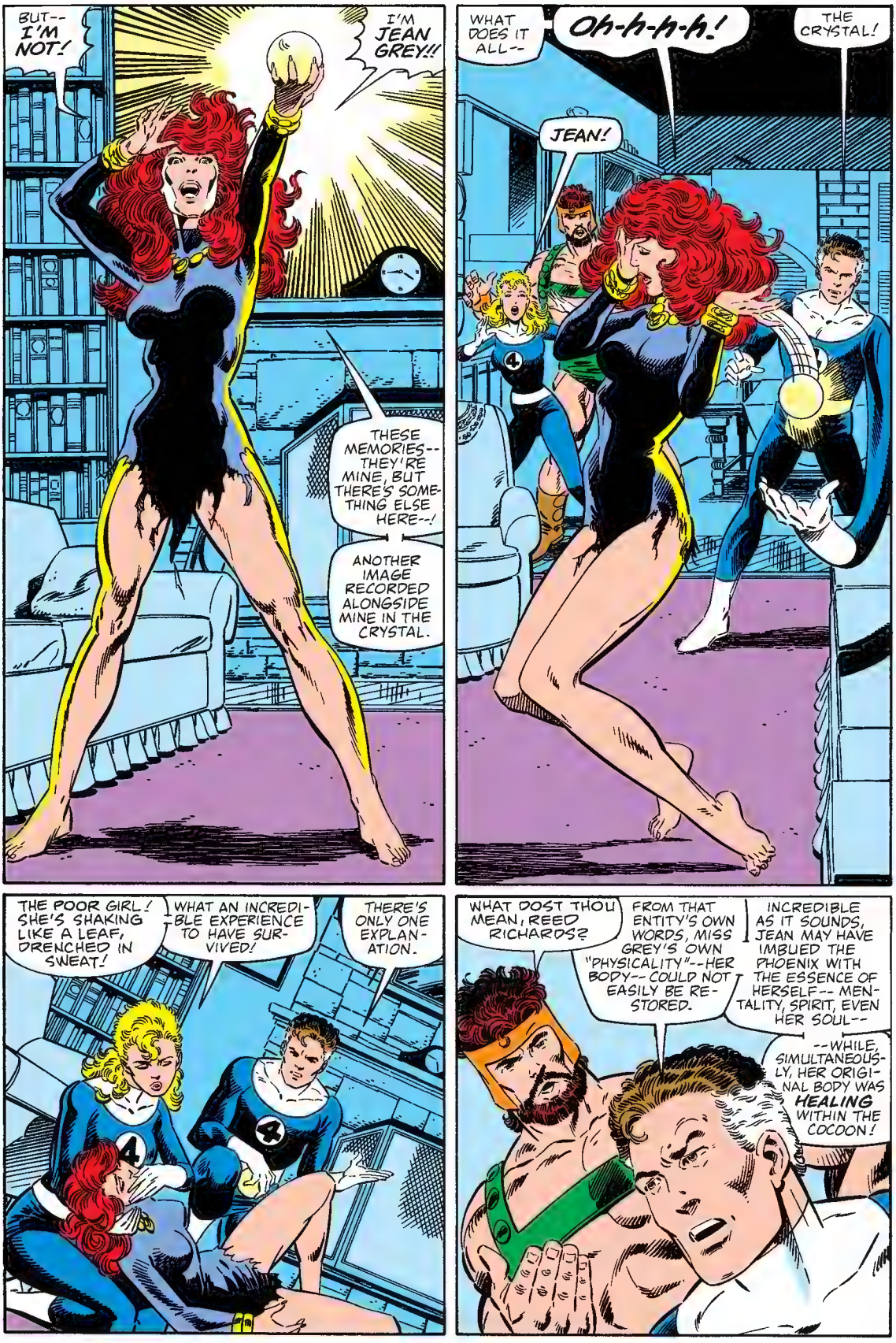

BUT HOW COULD I-- HOW COULD ANYONE-- HAVE SURVIVED-- ≥GASP!≤!≤
ALL OF YOU-- LOOK!
WHAT...?!?
I'M HALLUCIN-ATING-- MY MIND'S GOING --I SEE A LIGHT, I HEAR ...MUSIC?! THIS IS INSANE!


MY PAIN-- I DON'T FEEL IT ANYMORE!
NO! NO!!
I CAN'T BE DYING-- NOT YET, IT'S TOO SOON-- TOO MUCH DEPENDS ON ME!
I WON'T FAIL MY FRIENDS --MY LOVE!


DON'T BE AFRAID.
I MEAN NO HARM.
WHO-- WHAT-- ARE YOU?!


I'LL SECOND THAT QUESTION.
REED, ANY IDEAS--?!
THE SHUTTLE HAS EVIDENTLY BEEN INFILTRATED BY A FORCE--OR ENTITY--COMPOSED OF PURE ENERGY.
BUT...WHY HATH THE WORLD GROWN STILL ABOUT US?
TIME WARP!
THAT ENTITY HAS FROZEN TIME AROUND US WHILE IT DOES... WHAT IT'S DOING.
BUT... WHAT IS IT DOING ???
I AM FIRE.
A FORCE OF LIFE.
YOU CALLED OUT FOR AID. I ANSWERED.
YOUR FORM IS SO FRAGILE--HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY ENDURE?
PLEASE--DON'T... CONCERN YOURSELF WITH ME--I'M ALREADY DEAD. I'M JUST... TOO DARN STUBBORN TO QUIT.
BUT, IF YOU CAN--SAVE THE X-MEN!
ESPECIALLY... SCOTT?
HOW DO YOU KNOW?!
MY CONSCIOUSNESS--MY FORM, AND IT'S ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE ON THIS PLANE OF EXISTENCE--DERIVE FROM YOU. THEY PROVIDE AN... AWARENESS OF YOUR DOMINANT EMOTIONS AND MEMORIES.
OH, GREAT--YOU MEAN YOU'RE A FIGMENT OF MY IMAGINATION?
IN PART.
YOU ARE HUMAN, JEAN GREY, I AM OF THE UNIVERSE.

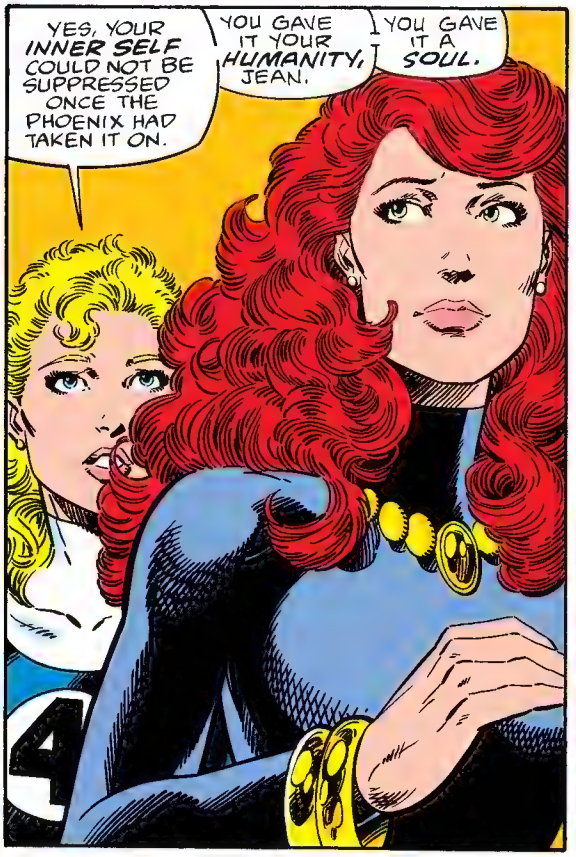

YOU'RE-- ME?!?
IT IS A SHELL, NOTHING MORE.
YOUR OWN PHYSICALITY CANNOT EASILY BE RESTORED. FOR ITS OWN PROTECTION, YOUR MIND REFUSES TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FULL EXTENT OF THE INJURIES YOU HAVE SUFFERED. YOUR EXISTENCE IS FAR CLOSER TO ITS TRANSITION THAN YOU KNOW.
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?!
YOU CALLED, CHILD OF MAN. AND I, MOTHER OF STARS, ANSWERED.
I WANT TO SAVE MY FRIENDS!
AND--I-- I ADMIT IT --I WANT TO LIVE!
THEN, TAKE MY HANDS.
WHAT WILL HAPPEN?
YOU WILL GAIN YOUR HEART'S DESIRE.
FOR A PRICE, RIGHT?
YES.
AT LEAST YOU'RE HONEST.
I'M AFRAID.
DEATH IS THE CERTAINTY. LIFE IS THE GREATEST OF UNKNOWNS.
EACH DAY, EACH MOMENT, CONTAINS RISK. THE PERIL CAN BE AS GREAT AS THE GLORY. ONLY IN THE GRAVE CAN SAFETY--AND PERHAPS PEACE-- BE TRULY FOUND. WHICH DO YOU DESIRE?
WHO'M I KIDDING?! IN THIS CASE, I'D DANCE WITH THE DEVIL HIMSELF!
I AM NOT THAT...
...YET. BUT THAT IS THE RISK I AM TAKING!
Oh!
I'M ALIVE-- MORESO THAN EVER BEFORE--
--NOW AND FOREVER...
...I AM PHOENIX!


BUT-- I'M NOT!
I'M JEAN GREY!!
THESE MEMORIES-- THEY'RE MINE, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE HERE--!
ANOTHER IMAGE RECORDED ALONGSIDE MINE IN THE CRYSTAL.
WHAT DOES IT ALL--
Oh-h-h-h!
THE CRYSTAL!
JEAN!
THE POOR GIRL! SHE'S SHAKING LIKE A LEAF, DRENCHED IN SWEAT!
WHAT AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE TO HAVE SURVIVED!
THERE'S ONLY ONE EXPLANATION.
WHAT DOST THOU MEAN, REED RICHARDS?
FROM THAT ENTITY'S OWN WORDS, MISS GREY'S OWN "PHYSICALITY"--HER BODY-- COULD NOT EASILY BE RESTORED.
INCREDIBLE AS IT SOUNDS, JEAN MAY HAVE IMBUED THE PHOENIX WITH THE ESSENCE OF HERSELF-- MENTALITY, SPIRIT, EVEN HER SOUL--
--WHILE, SIMULTANEOUSLY, HER ORIGINAL BODY WAS HEALING WITHIN THE COCOON!

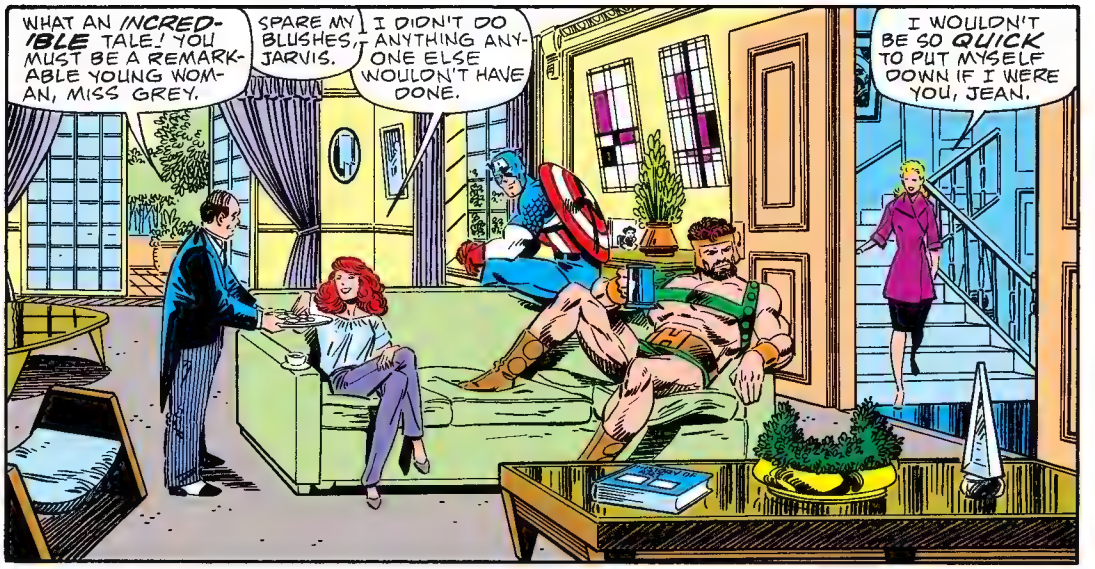
PART OF ME FEELS FINE! I HAVE... ALL MY OWN MEMORIES. ALL MY OWN...
HOPES? LOVES? YOU SEE THE PROBLEM, DON'T YOU?
THE ENERGY CREATURE FORCED ITSELF TO TOTALLY BELIEVE IT WAS JEAN...IN STRIVING FOR SOME KIND OF AUTHENTICITY, ONE MIGHT ASSUME.
BUT... HOW CAN I EVER KNOW I'M REALLY ME, AND NOT THAT... THAT THING? HOW CAN I EVER KNOW FOR SURE?
I THINK I CAN ANSWER THAT.
I CAUGHT THE LAST FEW SECONDS OF THAT PSYCHIC MOVIOLA AS I WAS LANDING MY JET-CYCLE.
AN UNNERVING EXPERIENCE.
BUT IT MATCHES VERY WELL WITH WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE BEASTS' REPORT IN THE AVENGERS' FILES.
THAT SHUTTLE OF YOURS DID CRASH IN JAMAICA BAY. AND IN WHAT MUST STAND AS A MAJOR MIRACLE, THERE WERE NO FATALITIES.
IN FACT, ONE PERSON SEEMED TO COME OUT OF THE WRECK EVEN BETTER THAN BEFORE.
JEAN GREY.
M... ME?
OR SOMETHING THAT THOUGHT IT WAS YOU. SOMETHING THAT LATER TURNED OUT TO BE THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF PURE EVIL.
THE CREATURE!
EXACTLY. IT CALLED ITSELF PHOENIX, AND IT WAS WELL ON ITS WAY TO DESTROYING US ALL...
...UNTIL JEAN DEFEATED IT.
ME?!?
HOW? I WAS STILL ZONKED OUT ON THE BOTTOM OF THE BAY...
WASN'T I?

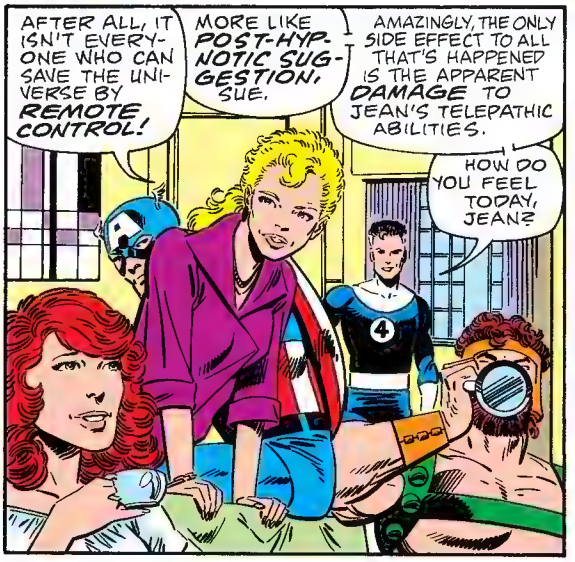
INDEED YOU WERE, JEAN. BUT I CAN SEE CAP'S POINT.
APPARENTLY, THE CREATURE KNEW THE RISKS OF TAKING ON A HUMAN FORM... BOTH GOOD AND BAD.
YOU MEAN...
...IT WAS MY HUMANITY THAT TURNED THE FORCE BAD?

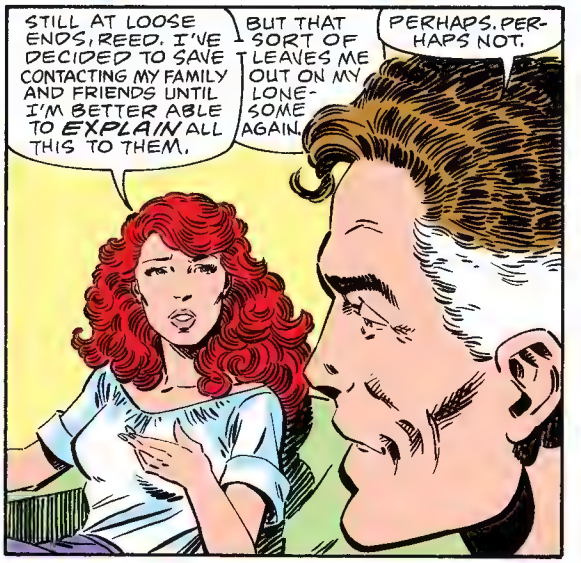
ON THE CONTRARY, MISS GREY... I BELIEVE IT WAS THE POWER OF THE ENTITY REBELLING AGAINST THE FORCE OF YOUR WILL THAT TAINTED IT!
THE PHOENIX HAD DUPLICATED YOU DOWN TO THE LAST ATOM OF YOUR STRUCTURE.
IT HAD IMITATED THE PATTERNS OF YOUR BRAIN-WAVES SO PRECISELY THAT EVEN A TRAINED MIND-READER COULD NOT HAVE RECOGNIZED IT FOR WHAT IT WAS.


YES, YOUR INNER SELF COULD NOT BE SUPPRESSED ONCE THE PHOENIX HAD TAKEN IT ON.
YOU GAVE IT YOUR HUMANITY, JEAN.
YOU GAVE IT A SOUL.

AND, IN THE LAST MOMENTS, AS IT HOVERED BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS, UP THERE ON THE MOON, THAT'S WHAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE.
BECAUSE THERE'S NO FORCE IN THE UNIVERSE THAT CAN SUPPRESS THE SPLENDOR OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT. AND IT WAS THAT SPIRIT, EVEN IN DUPLICATE FORM, THAT WAS ENOUGH TO DEFEAT THE EVIL POWER OF THE PHOENIX.


WHAT AN INCREDIBLE TALE! YOU MUST BE A REMARKABLE YOUNG WOMAN, MISS GREY.
SPARE MY BLUSHES, JARVIS.
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING ANYONE ELSE WOULDN'T HAVE DONE.
I WOULDN'T BE SO QUICK TO PUT MYSELF DOWN IF I WERE YOU, JEAN.


AFTER ALL, IT ISN'T EVERYONE WHO CAN SAVE THE UNIVERSE BY REMOTE CONTROL!
MORE LIKE POST-HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION, SUE.
AMAZINGLY, THE ONLY SIDE EFFECT TO ALL THAT'S HAPPENED IS THE APPARENT DAMAGE TO JEAN'S TELEPATHIC ABILITIES.
HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY, JEAN?


STILL AT LOOSE ENDS, REED. I'VE DECIDED TO SAVE CONTACTING MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS UNTIL I'M BETTER ABLE TO EXPLAIN ALL THIS TO THEM.
BUT THAT SORT OF LEAVES ME OUT ON MY LONESOME AGAIN.
PERHAPS. PERHAPS NOT.

I KNOW THAT TWINKLE. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
WELL... IT'S TRUE THE X-MEN ARE... "OUT OF BOUNDS." AT LEAST THE PRESENT TEAM...

... BUT IT HAS OCCURRED TO ME THERE'S STILL SOMEONE WE CAN CONTACT...

WHO IS REED CALLING?
FOR THE AMAZING ANSWER DON'T DARE MISS THE DRAMATIC DEBUT OF MARVEL'S NEWEST SUPER-HIT SENSATION...
X-FACTOR
ON SALE NEXT MONTH!
THEN COME BACK TO THE SAME OL' STAND FOR FANTASTIC FOUR #287 AND A TITANIC TALE TELLINGLY TITLED...
PRISONER OF THE FLESH
FEATURING THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF JOLTIN' JOE SINNOTT!!!

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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
Fantastic Four
THIS IS PEGGY McARTHUR, AVERAGE AMERICAN HOUSE-WIFE. IN TEN SECONDS SHE WILL MAKE A DECISION--
--IF IT'S THE WRONG ONE IT WILL MEAN THE END OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
BYRNE/SINNOTT

STan Lee PRESENTS:
JOHN BYRNE WRITER/PENCILER
GLYNIS OLIVER COLORIST
JIM NOVAK LETTERER
MICHAEL CARLIN EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER EDITOR IN CHIEF
AND A MIGHTY MARVEL WELCOME TO JOE SINNOTT INKER EXTRAORDINAIRE!
PRISONER OF THE FLESH
WELL, WELL!! WE WERE ALL WONDERING WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TINKERING WITH ALL THIS TIME, REED!
THIS IS SOME SET-UP!
OH, GOOD MORNING, WASP. I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND MY USING AVENGERS EQUIPMENT LIKE THIS?
"SELF IS THE ONLY PRISON THAT CAN EVER BIND THE SOUL."
HENRY VAN DYKE (1852-1933)
"THE PRISONER AND THE ANGEL"

HOW COULD I MIND? YOU'RE OUR GUEST!
AND, AFTER WE AVENGERS INVITED YOU FOUR FOLKS TO COME AND STAY WITH US WHILE YOUR HEADQUARTERS IS BEING REBUILT...
WELL, I KNEW IT WOULD BE ASKING TOO MUCH TO EXPECT THE LEGENDARY MISTER FANTASTIC TO JUST SIT ON HIS HANDS ALL THAT TIME.
I PRESUME, THOUGH, THAT THIS THING ISN'T SOMETHING THAT WILL BLOW UP WHEN WE FINALLY GET AROUND TO DISMANTLING IT?
HARDLY, JANET.
MY DEVICES ARE RARELY OF AN EXPLOSIVE NATURE.
JUST KIDDING, REED.
BUT... CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT THIS GIZMO IS, AT LEAST, OR IS IT STILL HUSH-HUSH?
NOT AT ALL, JAN.
TO PUT THINGS INTO THEIR PROPER ORDER, THE RECENT RETURN FROM THE DEAD OF MARVEL GIRL* HAS STARTED ME THINKING ABOUT DOCTOR DOOM AGAIN.
AS YOU WELL KNOW, DOOM IS ONE OF THE GREATEST MENACES MANKIND HAS EVER FACED--AND HE IS SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD.
NEVERTHELESS, HE WAS HALE AND HEARTY DURING OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE BEYONDER**, AT A TIME AFTER DOOM'S DEATH, AND THERE HAS BEEN AT LEAST ONE RECENT ATTACK ON THE FANTASTIC FOUR WHICH CANNOT BE ACCOUNTED FOR AS ONE OF DOOM'S MANY CONTINGENCY PLANS.
*LAST ISSUE.
**IN SECRET WARS #'S I THRU 12.

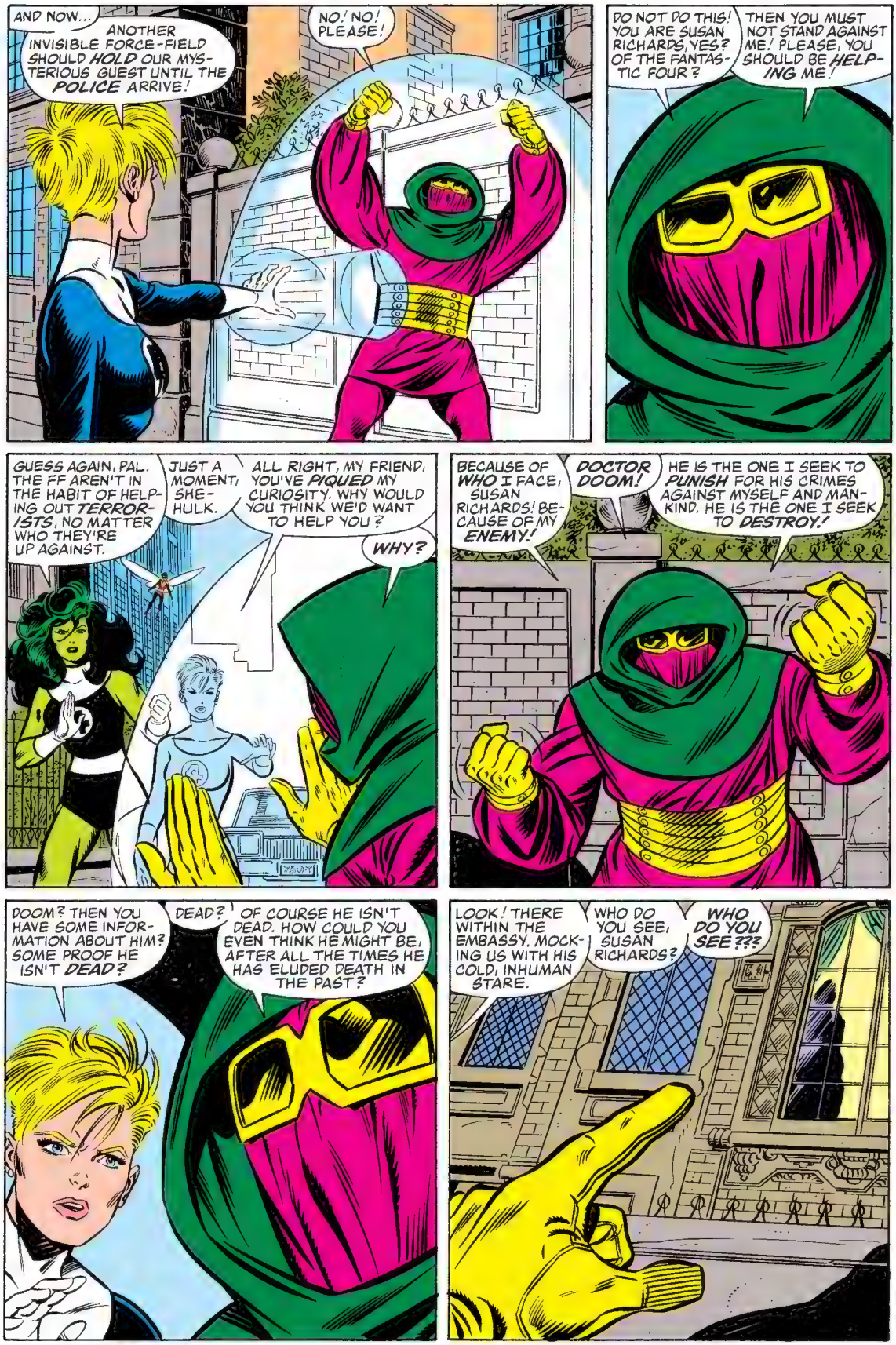
ARE YOU GOING TO TELL ME THIS IS SOME SORT OF DOOM TRACER?
IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING, YES.
LIKE ALL HUMAN BEINGS VICTOR VON DOOM'S BRAIN-WAVE PATTERNS ARE AS UNIQUE, AS INDIVIDUALIZED AS HIS FINGER-PRINTS.
THIS DEVICE IS KEYED TO THE PARTICULAR CYCLES OF DOOM'S BRAIN, WHICH I MANAGED TO RECORD SOME YEARS BACK.
THUS, BY SETTING THE SCANNER ON A RANDOM SWEEP PATTERN I MAY BE ABLE TO ISOLATE DOOM'S DELTA WAVES AGAINST THE GENERAL BACKGROUND "NOISE."
ALL THIS IS ASSUMING HE IS STILL ALIVE, OF COURSE. AS I RECALL HE'S PRETTY ENTHUSIASTICALLY DEAD THIS TIME, REED.
TRUE, JANET, TRUE.
IN OUR LAST "OFFICIAL" ENCOUNTER WITH DOOM HE WAS BLASTED INTO SUB-ATOMIC DUST DURING THE BATTLE BETWEEN TERRAX AND THE SILVER SURFER.*
*IN ISSUE #260.
AND I'D THINK THAT WOULD BE ENOUGH TO TERMINATE ANYONE. EVEN VICTOR VON DOOM!
SUE!
DARLING, YOU LOOK LOVELY!
ER... I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN A SPECIAL OCCASION AGAIN, HAVE I?
NO, REED. YOU'RE SAFE THIS TIME. BUT JAN HAS CONVINCED ME IT'S TIME TO CHANGE MY HAIRSTYLE AGAIN...
...AND SHE VERY KINDLY OFFERED TO INTRODUCE ME TO HER OWN HAIRDRESSER.
IN JUST OVER HALF AN HOUR, TOO! WE'D BETTER GET A MOVE ON, SUE!

GLAD YOU NOTICED THE TIME, WASP. I WAS JUST ABOUT TO COME DOWN AND GET YOU ALL.
SO YOU DECIDED TO COME ALONG AFTER ALL, DID YOU, JENNIFER?
I'M GLAD. YOU AND I HAVEN'T REALLY HAD ANY CHANCE TO CHAT SINCE YOU JOINED THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
AND WHAT BETTER OPPORTUNITY FOR GIRL-TALK THAN A TRIP TO THE BEAUTY PARLOR?
I WONDER IF THEY HAVE THE LATEST ISSUE OF "MODERN MOVIE-STAR?"
HA HA! CAREFUL NOW, JEN. MUCH MORE OF THAT KIND OF TALK AND YOU'LL HAVE TO SURRENDER YOUR N.O.W. MEMBERSHIP!
WELL, I MUST SAY THIS MAKES QUITE A CHANGE FROM THE USUAL DAY TO DAY ROUTINE OF A SCIENTIST'S LIFE!
IT'S NOT OFTEN A FELLOW FINDS HIMSELF IN THE COMPANY OF THREE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN IN THE WORLD!
MMM! FLATTERY WILL GET YOU EVERYWHERE, HUBBINS!
WANT TO WALK US OVER TO JAN'S HAIRDRESSER?
ALAS, I CANNOT AVAIL MYSELF OF THAT PLEASURE, BUT I WILL GO AS FAR AS THE MANSION FOYER WITH YOU.
I WANT TO GET IN A LITTLE MORE WORK ON THE NEW FANTASTICAR BEFORE LUNCH, AND THIS SEEMS AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY TO HEAD UP TO THE HANGAR FLOOR.
ALERT■ ALERT■ POTENTIAL DELTA WAVE MATCH■
CONFLICTING DATA■ POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION NOT POSSIBLE■

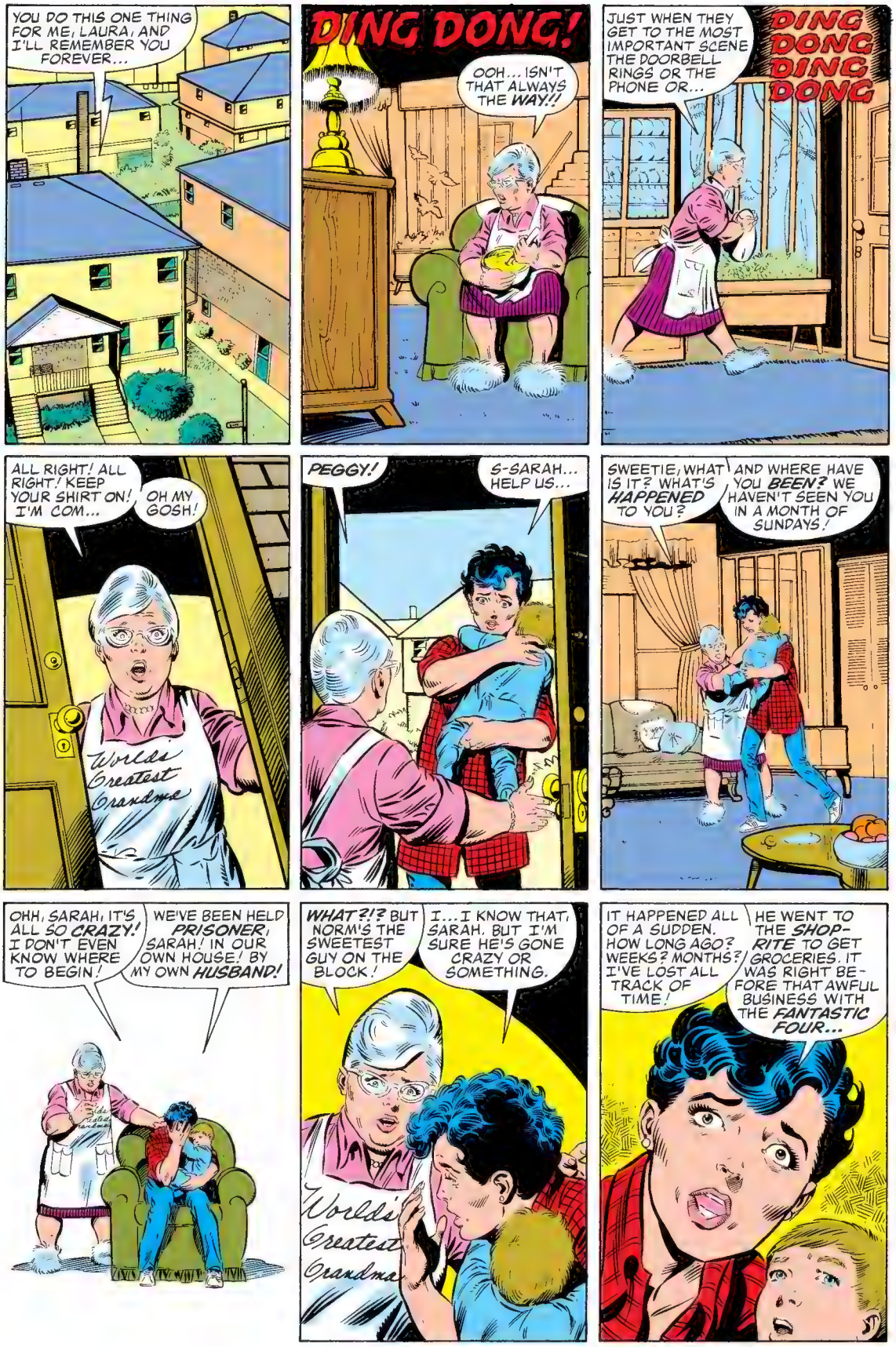
JANET, YOU NEVER CEASE TO AMAZE ME.
WHEN YOU SAID YOU'D INTRODUCE ME TO YOUR OWN HAIRDRESSER, I NEVER EXPECTED TO END UP ON EMBASSY ROW!
BUT OF COURSE, SUSAN!
WE VAN DYNES HAVE NEVER SETTLED FOR ANYTHING LESS THAN THE VERY, VERY BEST!
BUT THE PERSONAL STYLIST TO THE WIFE OF THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR...?
WHY NOT, SHE-HULK? ANDRE HERE IS FAR AND AWAY THE BEST IN NEW YORK.
POSSIBLY THE WORLD!
MADAME FLATTERS ME! I AM BUT A PALE SHADOW OF MY TEACHER, THE GREAT JACQUES DE PARIS!
TISH TOSH, ANDRE!
ANYWAY, WHEN MADAME DE BOUVILLIER SAID I COULD MAKE USE OF ANDRE'S TALENTS, WELL...
AS SOON AS YOU AND REED JOINED US AT AVENGERS MANSION I STARTED CALCULATING HOW SOON I COULD BRING YOU OVER HERE, SUE.
WELL, I'M HONORED TO SAY THE LEAST!
NON, NON! MADAME HONORS ME! I...
NOM DE NOM!!
BOOM!
WHAT IN THE NAME OF...?!?
HOLY COW! IT'S THE EMBASSY ACROSS THE STREET!
IT'S BEING ATTACKED!!

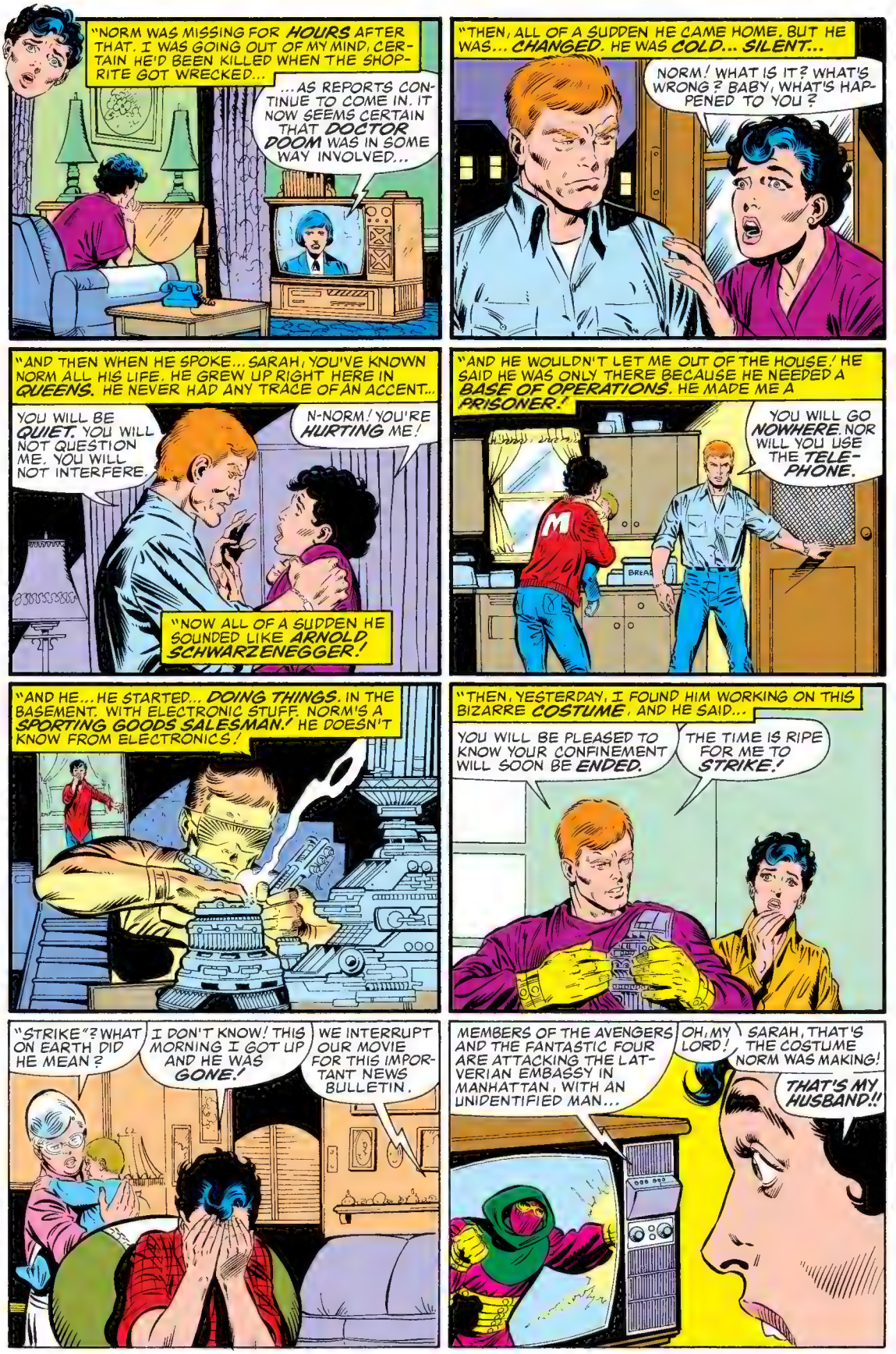
"ACROSS THE STREET..."?
THAT'S THE EMBASSY OF LATVERIA! THE HOMELAND OF DOCTOR DOOM!
AND THAT'S NOT THE ONLY SURPRISE WE'VE GOT TODAY, SUE! LOOK WHO'S ATTACKING!
IT CAN'T BE! THE INVINCIBLE MAN!!
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
THE INVINCIBLE MAN WAS THE ALIEN SUPER SKRULL, MASQUERADING AS MY LATE FATHER!
AND THE SKRULLS HAVE ALL BEEN DEFEATED!*
NEVER MIND THAT!
WHOEVER THIS CLOWN IS, HE'S ENDANGERING CIVILIAN LIVES!
WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!
*SEE THIS YEAR'S FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL FOR FULL DETAILS.

AND MY WASP'S STING SHOULD BE A GOOD START IN DOING JUST THAT!
LOW POWER FIRST, JUST TO GET YOUR ATTENTION!
WHAT...?
NO! DON'T!!
C'MON, SUE, WE'RE NOT GONNA STAND BY AND LET JAN HAVE ALL THE FUN, ARE WE?
OF COURSE NOT, SHE-HULK. JUST LET ME TURN MY STREET CLOTHES INVISIBLE REVEALING MY COSTUME UNDERNEATH...
AND ONE OF MY HANDY INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD RAMPS WILL CARRY US INTO THE HEART OF THE FRAY!
NOW WE'RE COOKIN' WITH GAS!
HEY, 'VINCE...
IT'S CLOBBERING TIME!
UNGH!!
NICE MOVE, SHE-HULK!
ALTHOUGH I REALLY THINK YOU SHOULD COME UP WITH YOUR OWN BATTLE-CRY. ISN'T THAT ONE COPYRIGHT THE THING?
MAYBE SO, JANET. BUT SOMEBODY IN THE FF HAS TO SAY IT. IT JUST DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT WITHOUT IT!

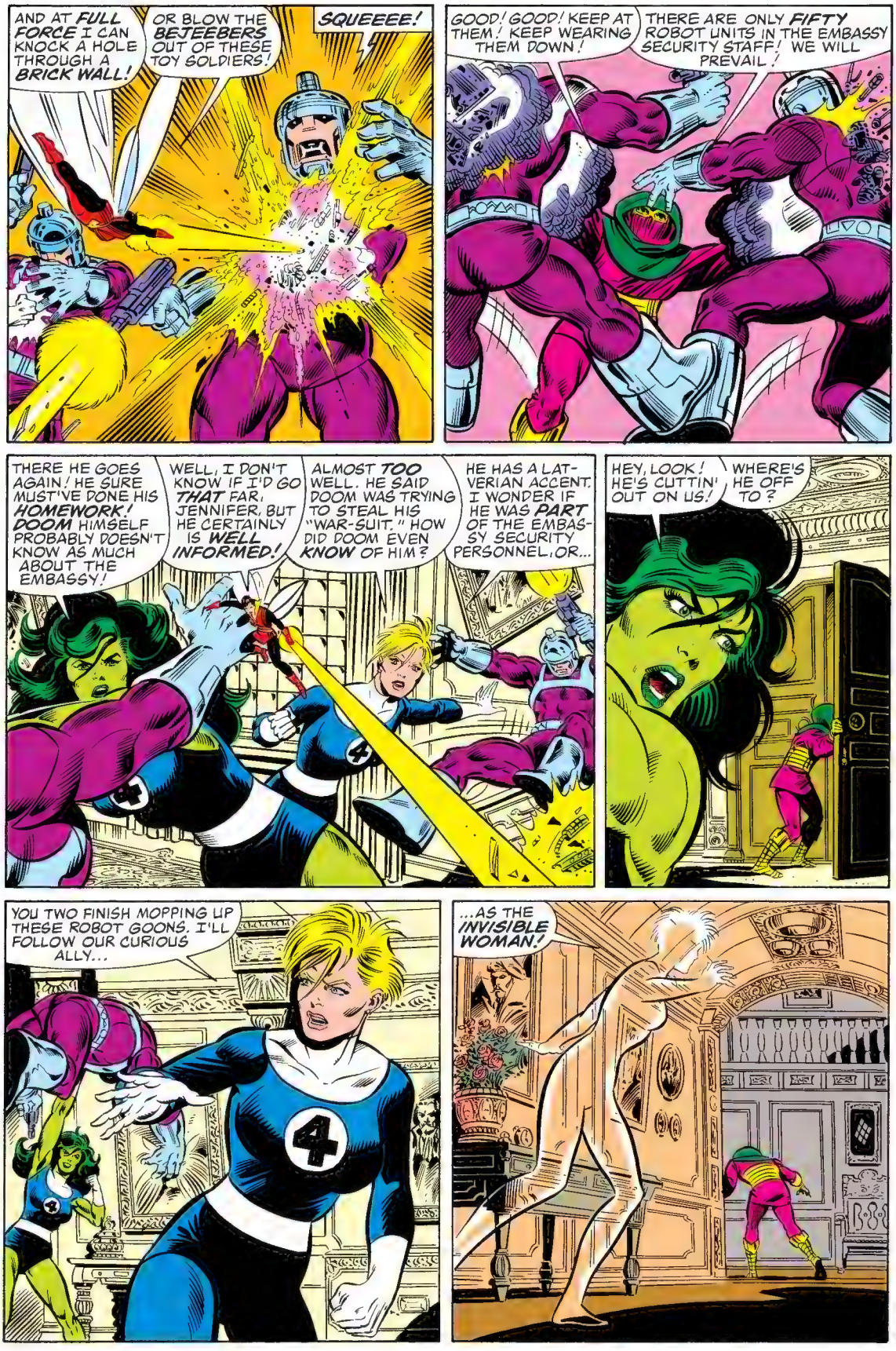

AND NOW...
ANOTHER INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD SHOULD HOLD OUR MYSTERIOUS GUEST UNTIL THE POLICE ARRIVE!
NO! NO! PLEASE!
DO NOT DO THIS! YOU ARE SUSAN RICHARDS, YES? OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR?
THEN YOU MUST NOT STAND AGAINST ME! PLEASE, YOU SHOULD BE HELPING ME!
GUESS AGAIN, PAL. THE FF AREN'T IN THE HABIT OF HELPING OUT TERRORISTS, NO MATTER WHO THEY'RE UP AGAINST.
JUST A MOMENT, SHE-HULK.
ALL RIGHT, MY FRIEND, YOU'VE PIQUED MY CURIOSITY. WHY WOULD YOU THINK WE'D WANT TO HELP YOU?
WHY?
BECAUSE OF WHO I FACE, SUSAN RICHARDS! BECAUSE OF MY ENEMY!
DOCTOR DOOM!
HE IS THE ONE I SEEK TO PUNISH FOR HIS CRIMES AGAINST MYSELF AND MANKIND. HE IS THE ONE I SEEK TO DESTROY!
DOOM? THEN YOU HAVE SOME INFORMATION ABOUT HIM? SOME PROOF HE ISN'T DEAD?
DEAD?
OF COURSE HE ISN'T DEAD. HOW COULD YOU EVEN THINK HE MIGHT BE, AFTER ALL THE TIMES HE HAS ELUDED DEATH IN THE PAST?
LOOK! THERE WITHIN THE EMBASSY. MOCKING US WITH HIS COLD, INHUMAN STARE.
WHO DO YOU SEE, SUSAN RICHARDS?
WHO DO YOU SEE???

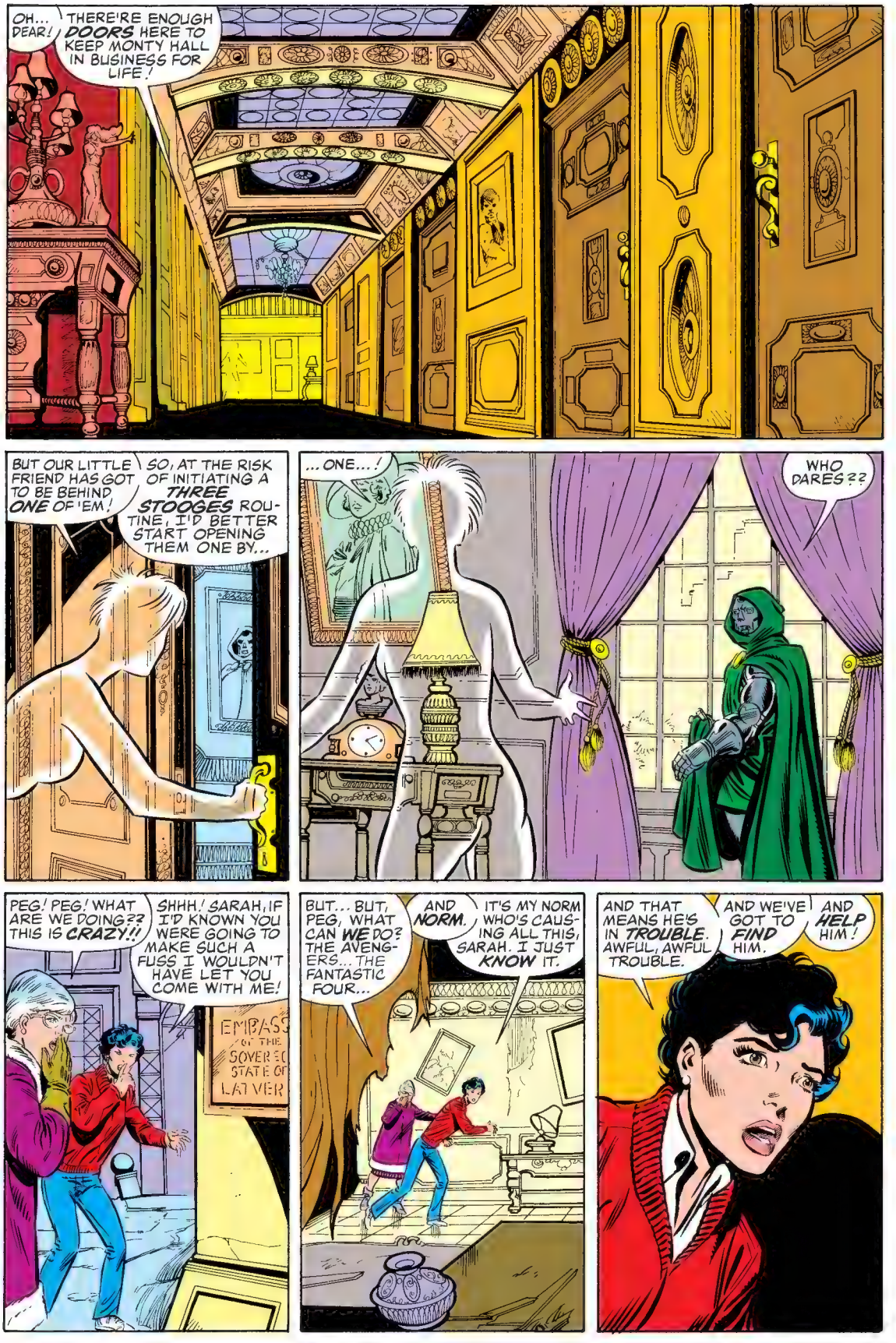
DOCTOR DOOM!!
IT IS DOOM! BUT... EVEN SO, WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT? AS KING OF LATVERIA, DOOM HAS DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY!
"DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY!?"
FOR THE MURDERING MONSTER WHO TRIED TO STEAL FROM ME THE SECRETS OF MY INVINCIBLE WAR-SUIT...
...AND WHO TOOK MY BELOVED WIFE AND BABY GIRL?
MY SWEET ANYA, MY LITTLE MARIA -- HE HOLDS THEM HOSTAGE! HE... HE...
EASY, EASY!
YOU MAKE A STRONG CASE FOR YOURSELF, MISTER.
SHE-HULK, WASP... WHAT DO YOU SAY, LADIES?
DO WE HELP THIS MAN?
DO YOU EVEN HAVE TO ASK, SUE?
DOOM DOESN'T HAVE INTERNATIONAL LAW ON HIS SIDE THIS TIME! THIS IS A HOSTAGE SITUATION!
LET'S GO BREAK SOME HEADS!
BUT TRY NOT TO HARM ANY OF THE CIVILIAN STAFF... IT'S DOOM WE WANT!!

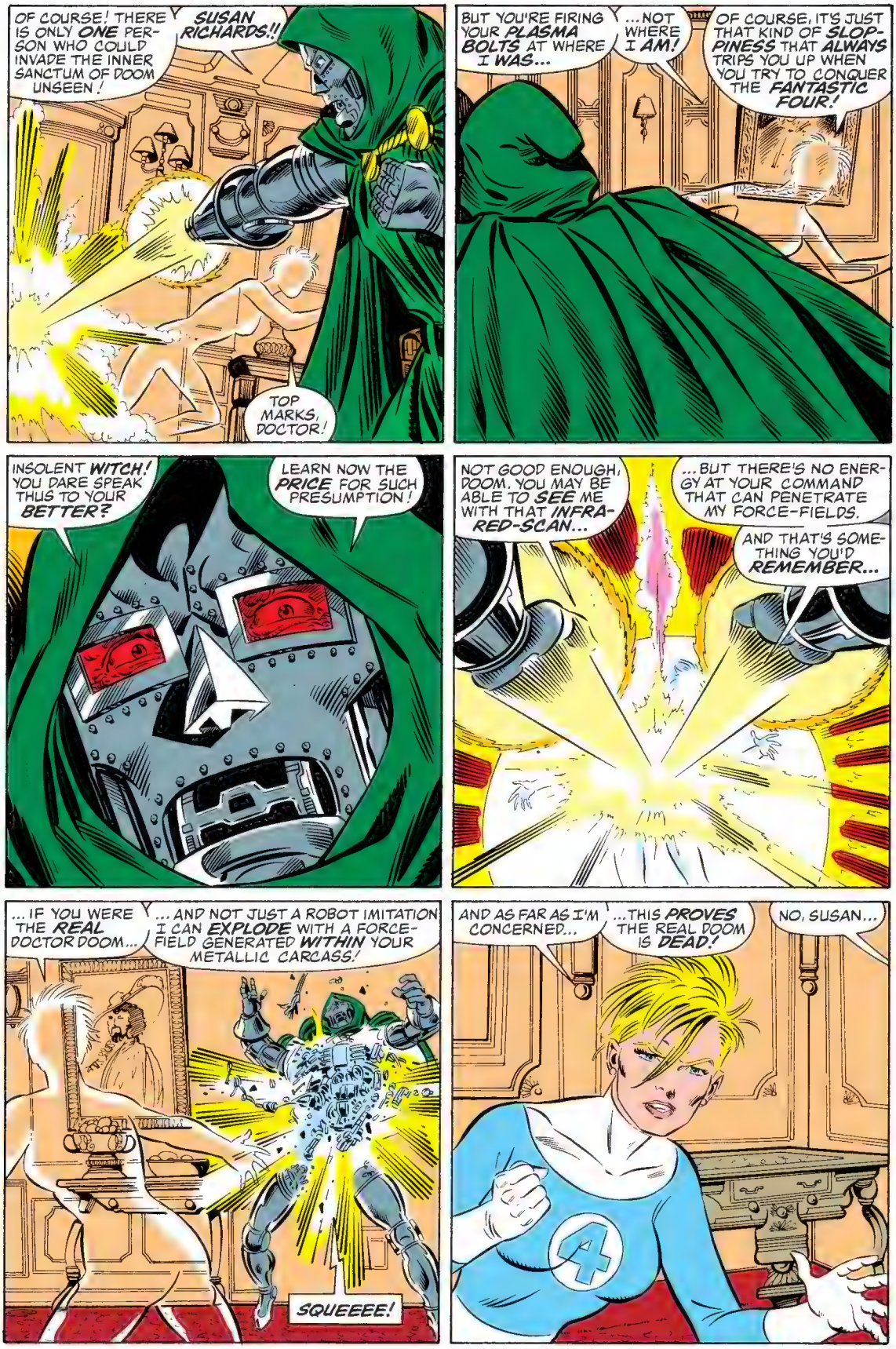

YOU DO THIS ONE THING FOR ME, LAURA, AND I'LL REMEMBER YOU FOREVER...
DING DONG!
OOH... ISN'T THAT ALWAYS THE WAY!!
JUST WHEN THEY GET TO THE MOST IMPORTANT SCENE THE DOORBELL RINGS OR THE PHONE OR...
DING DONG DING DONG
ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON! I'M COM...
OH MY GOSH!
Worlds Greatest Grandma
PEGGY!
S-SARAH... HELP US...
SWEETIE, WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?
AND WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WE HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A MONTH OF SUNDAYS!
OHH, SARAH, IT'S ALL SO CRAZY! I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN!
WE'VE BEEN HELD PRISONER, SARAH! IN OUR OWN HOUSE! BY MY OWN HUSBAND!
WHAT?!? BUT NORM'S THE SWEETEST GUY ON THE BLOCK!
I... I KNOW THAT, SARAH. BUT I'M SURE HE'S GONE CRAZY OR SOMETHING.
Worlds Greatest Grandma
IT HAPPENED ALL OF A SUDDEN. HOW LONG AGO? WEEKS? MONTHS? I'VE LOST ALL TRACK OF TIME!
HE WENT TO THE SHOP-RITE TO GET GROCERIES. IT WAS RIGHT BE-FORE THAT AWFUL BUSINESS WITH THE FANTASTIC FOUR...


"NORM WAS MISSING FOR HOURS AFTER THAT. I WAS GOING OUT OF MY MIND, CERTAIN HE'D BEEN KILLED WHEN THE SHOP-RITE GOT WRECKED...
...AS REPORTS CONTINUE TO COME IN, IT NOW SEEMS CERTAIN THAT DOCTOR DOOM WAS IN SOME WAY INVOLVED...
"THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN HE CAME HOME. BUT HE WAS... CHANGED. HE WAS COLD... SILENT...
NORM! WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG? BABY, WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?
"AND THEN WHEN HE SPOKE... SARAH, YOU'VE KNOWN NORM ALL HIS LIFE. HE GREW UP RIGHT HERE IN QUEENS. HE NEVER HAD ANY TRACE OF AN ACCENT...
YOU WILL BE QUIET. YOU WILL NOT QUESTION ME. YOU WILL NOT INTERFERE.
N-NORM! YOU'RE HURTING ME!
"NOW ALL OF A SUDDEN HE SOUNDED LIKE ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER!
"AND HE WOULDN'T LET ME OUT OF THE HOUSE.' HE SAID HE WAS ONLY THERE BECAUSE HE NEEDED A BASE OF OPERATIONS. HE MADE ME A PRISONER!'
YOU WILL GO NOWHERE. NOR WILL YOU USE THE TELE-PHONE.
"AND HE... HE STARTED... DOING THINGS. IN THE BASEMENT. WITH ELECTRONIC STUFF. NORM'S A SPORTING GOODS SALESMAN.' HE DOESN'T KNOW FROM ELECTRONICS!
"THEN, YESTERDAY, I FOUND HIM WORKING ON THIS BIZARRE COSTUME, AND HE SAID...
YOU WILL BE PLEASED TO KNOW YOUR CONFINEMENT WILL SOON BE ENDED.
THE TIME IS RIPE FOR ME TO STRIKE!
"STRIKE"? WHAT ON EARTH DID HE MEAN?
I DON'T KNOW! THIS MORNING I GOT UP AND HE WAS GONE!
WE INTERRUPT OUR MOVIE FOR THIS IMPORTANT NEWS BULLETIN.
MEMBERS OF THE AVENGERS AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE ATTACKING THE LATVERIAN EMBASSY IN MANHATTAN, WITH AN UNIDENTIFIED MAN...
OH, MY LORD!
SARAH, THAT'S THE COSTUME NORM WAS MAKING!
THAT'S MY HUSBAND!!

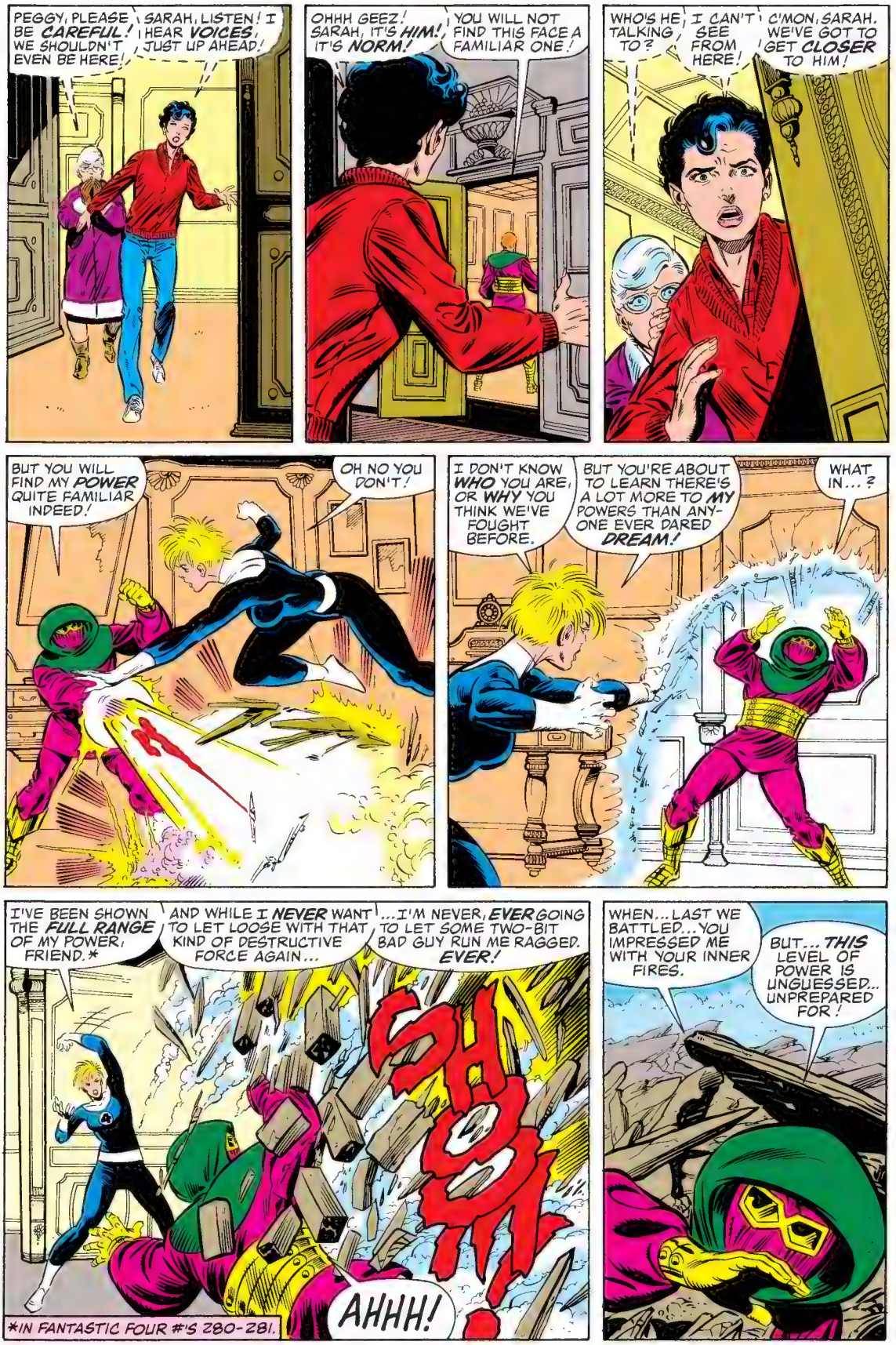
KNOK KNOK!!
EXCELLENT, SHE-HULK! EXCELLENT! WE HAVE BREECHED THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE!
"FIRST LINE"? HOW MANY LINES ARE THERE? AND HOW DO YOU KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT THE EMBASSY'S SECURITY?
I KNOW BECAUSE I HAVE TO KNOW. NOW, BEWARE. THE SECOND LINE IS MORE... EFFICIENT.
OH HO!
DOOM'S NASTY LITTLE WIND-UP GUARDIANS!
ALL RIGHT!! IT'S BEEN WEEKS SINCE I GOT TO BREAK SOME OF THEM!
ALERT! INTRUDER IDENTIFIED. NON-MUTANT VARIANT CODED SHE-HULK!
ADJUST ATTACK MODE!
SQUEEEE!
C'MON, JANET. LOOKS LIKE SHE-HULK MIGHT NEED OUR HELP AFTER ALL!
AND ABOUT TIME TOO! I WAS FEELING A LITTLE USELESS WATCHING HER SMASH THROUGH THE OUTER PERIMETER.
BUT AGAINST THESE ROBOT GOONS I HAVE NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT LETTING GO FULL FORCE WITH MY STING...

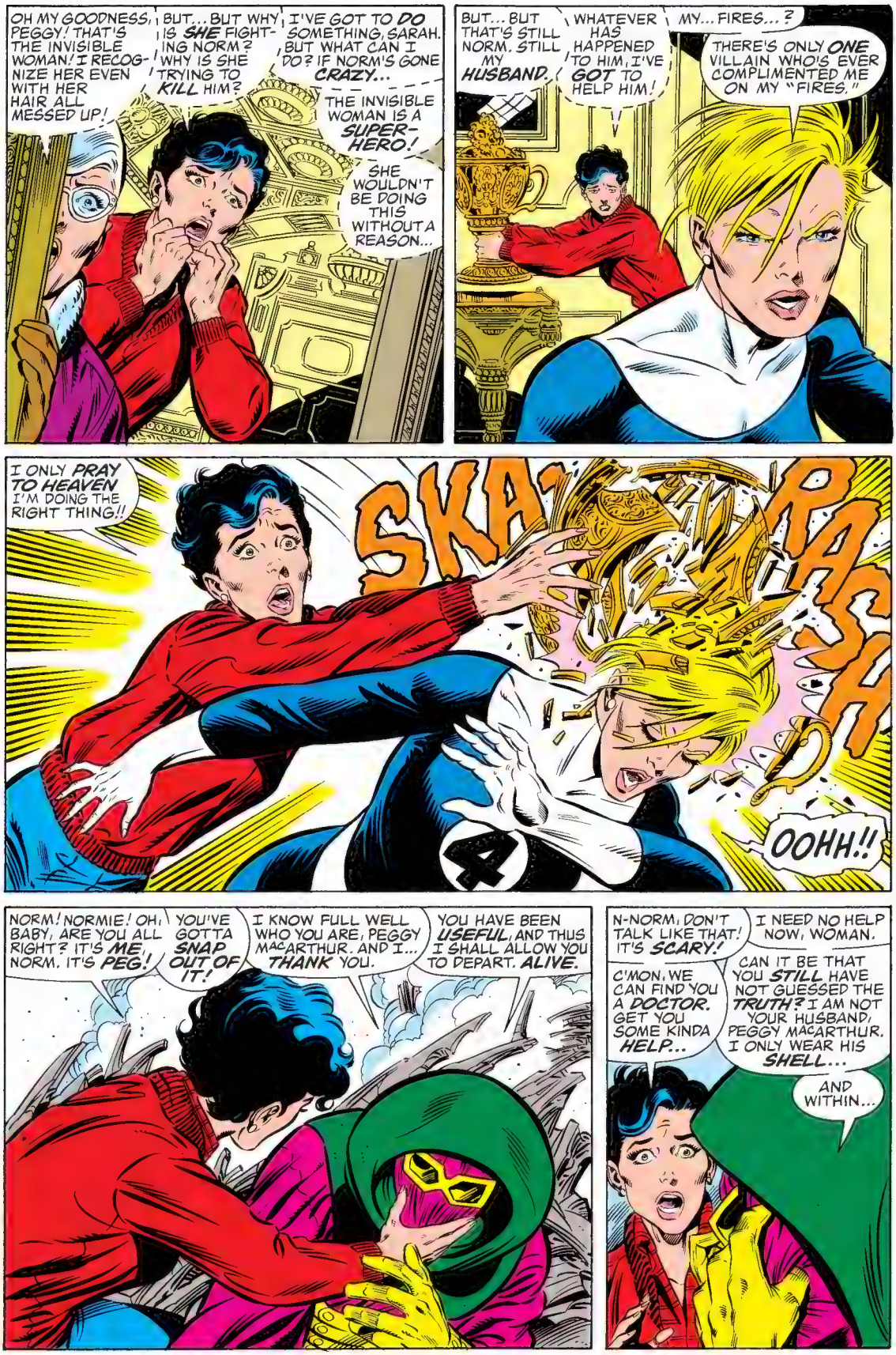

AND AT FULL FORCE I CAN KNOCK A HOLE THROUGH A BRICK WALL!
OR BLOW THE BEJEEBERS OUT OF THESE TOY SOLDIERS!
SQUEEEE!
GOOD! GOOD! KEEP AT THEM! KEEP WEARING THEM DOWN!
THERE ARE ONLY FIFTY ROBOT UNITS IN THE EMBASSY SECURITY STAFF! WE WILL PREVAIL!
THERE HE GOES AGAIN! HE SURE MUST'VE DONE HIS HOMEWORK! DOOM HIMSELF PROBABLY DOESN'T KNOW AS MUCH ABOUT THE EMBASSY!
WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF I'D GO THAT FAR, JENNIFER, BUT HE CERTAINLY IS WELL INFORMED!
ALMOST TOO WELL. HE SAID DOOM WAS TRYING TO STEAL HIS "WAR-SUIT." HOW DID DOOM EVEN KNOW OF HIM?
HE HAS A LATVERIAN ACCENT. I WONDER IF HE WAS PART OF THE EMBASSY SECURITY PERSONNEL, OR...
HEY, LOOK! HE'S CUTTIN' OUT ON US!
WHERE'S HE OFF TO?
YOU TWO FINISH MOPPING UP THESE ROBOT GOONS. I'LL FOLLOW OUR CURIOUS ALLY...
...AS THE INVISIBLE WOMAN!


OH... DEAR!
THERE'RE ENOUGH DOORS HERE TO KEEP MONTY HALL IN BUSINESS FOR LIFE!
BUT OUR LITTLE FRIEND HAS GOT TO BE BEHIND ONE OF 'EM!
SO, AT THE RISK OF INITIATING A THREE STOOGES ROUTINE, I'D BETTER START OPENING THEM ONE BY...
... ONE...!
WHO DARES??
PEG! PEG! WHAT ARE WE DOING?? THIS IS CRAZY!!
SHHH! SARAH, IF I'D KNOWN YOU WERE GOING TO MAKE SUCH A FUSS I WOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU COME WITH ME!
EMBAS
OF THE
SOVER
STATE OF
LATVER
BUT... BUT, PEG, WHAT CAN WE DO? THE AVENGERS... THE FANTASTIC FOUR...
AND NORM.
IT'S MY NORM WHO'S CAUSING ALL THIS, SARAH. I JUST KNOW IT.
AND THAT MEANS HE'S IN TROUBLE. AWFUL, AWFUL TROUBLE.
AND WE'VE GOT TO FIND HIM.
AND HELP HIM!


OF COURSE! THERE IS ONLY ONE PERSON WHO COULD INVADE THE INNER SANCTUM OF DOOM UNSEEN!
SUSAN RICHARDS!!
TOP MARKS, DOCTOR!
BUT YOU'RE FIRING YOUR PLASMA BOLTS AT WHERE I WAS...
...NOT WHERE I AM!
OF COURSE, IT'S JUST THAT KIND OF SLOPPINESS THAT ALWAYS TRIPS YOU UP WHEN YOU TRY TO CONQUER THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
INSOLENT WITCH! YOU DARE SPEAK THUS TO YOUR BETTER?
LEARN NOW THE PRICE FOR SUCH PRESUMPTION!
NOT GOOD ENOUGH, DOOM. YOU MAY BE ABLE TO SEE ME WITH THAT INFRA-RED-SCAN...
...BUT THERE'S NO ENERGY AT YOUR COMMAND THAT CAN PENETRATE MY FORCE-FIELDS.
AND THAT'S SOMETHING YOU'D REMEMBER...
...IF YOU WERE THE REAL DOCTOR DOOM...
...AND NOT JUST A ROBOT IMITATION I CAN EXPLODE WITH A FORCE-FIELD GENERATED WITHIN YOUR METALLIC CARCASS!
SQUEEEE!
AND AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED...
...THIS PROVES THE REAL DOOM IS DEAD!
NO, SUSAN...

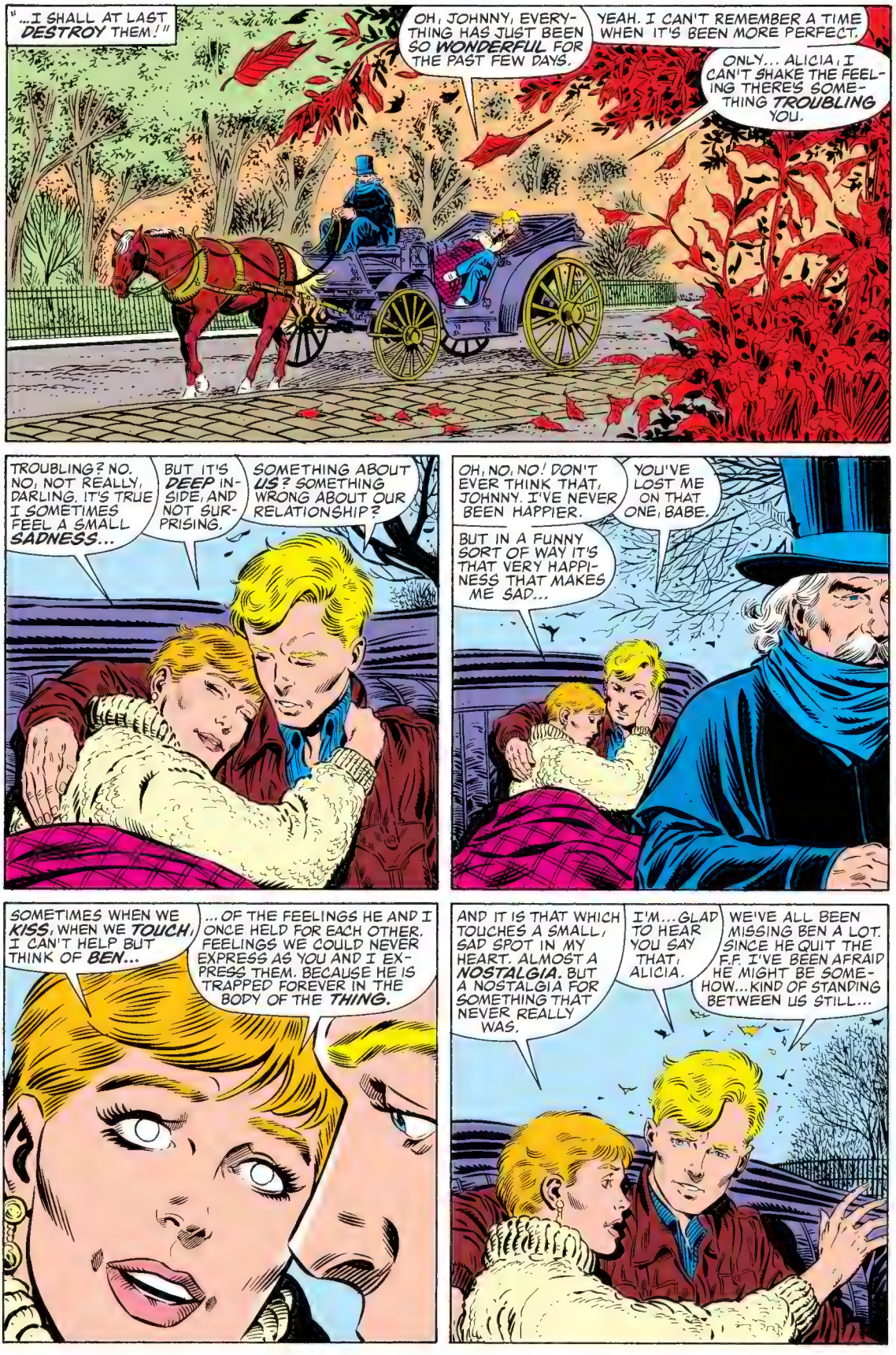
DOOM NEVER DIES!!
UNGH!!
4
VERY... NASTY, MISTER! IF I HADN'T INSTINCTIVELY THROWN A FORCE-FIELD 'ROUND MYSELF AT THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE THAT BLAST WOULD'VE CUT ME IN HALF!
AS IT IS, IT STILL KNOCKED THE WIND OUT OF ME!
IMPRESSIVE, SUSAN. VERY IMPRESSIVE. YOU HAVE HONED YOUR POWERS CONSIDERABLY SINCE THE LAST TIME WE FACED EACH OTHER IN BATTLE.
"...FACED EACH OTHER...?"
THEN YOU'RE DEFINITELY NOT WHO YOU'RE PRETENDING TO BE!
LET'S SEE WHO SHOWS THROUGH IF I USE MY POWERS TO TURN YOUR HEADGEAR INVISIBLE...
A WASTE OF VITAL ENERGY AT BEST, SUSAN.


PEGGY, PLEASE BE CAREFUL! WE SHOULDN'T EVEN BE HERE!
SARAH, LISTEN! I HEAR VOICES, JUST UP AHEAD!
OHHH GEEZ! SARAH, IT'S HIM! IT'S NORM!
YOU WILL NOT FIND THIS FACE A FAMILIAR ONE!
WHO'S HE TALKING TO?
I CAN'T SEE FROM HERE!
C'MON, SARAH. WE'VE GOT TO GET CLOSER TO HIM!
BUT YOU WILL FIND MY POWER QUITE FAMILIAR INDEED!
OH NO YOU DON'T!
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, OR WHY YOU THINK WE'VE FOUGHT BEFORE.
BUT YOU'RE ABOUT TO LEARN THERE'S A LOT MORE TO MY POWERS THAN ANY-ONE EVER DARED DREAM!
WHAT IN... ?
I'VE BEEN SHOWN THE FULL RANGE OF MY POWER, FRIEND.*
AND WHILE I NEVER WANT TO LET LOOSE WITH THAT KIND OF DESTRUCTIVE FORCE AGAIN...
...I'M NEVER, EVER GOING TO LET SOME TWO-BIT BAD GUY RUN ME RAGGED. EVER!
SHOOM!!
AHHH!
*IN FANTASTIC FOUR #'S 280-281.
WHEN... LAST WE BATTLED... YOU IMPRESSED ME WITH YOUR INNER FIRES.
BUT... THIS LEVEL OF POWER IS UNGUESSED.. UNPREPARED FOR!

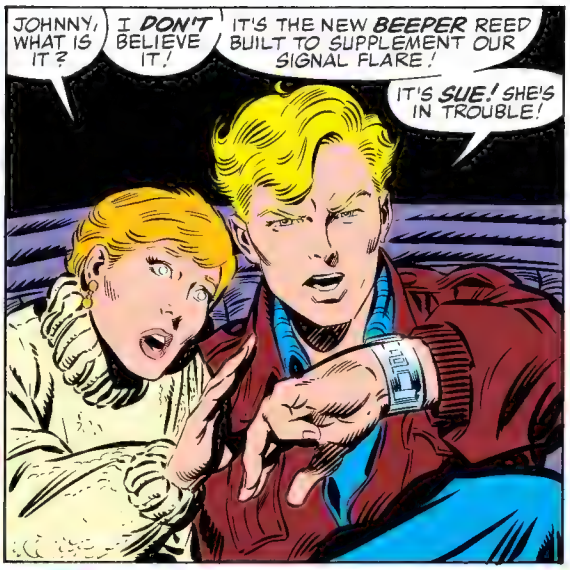

OH MY GOODNESS, PEGGY! THAT'S THE INVISIBLE WOMAN! I RECOGNIZE HER EVEN WITH HER HAIR ALL MESSED UP!
BUT... BUT WHY IS SHE FIGHTING NORM? WHY IS SHE TRYING TO KILL HIM?
I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING, SARAH. BUT WHAT CAN I DO? IF NORM'S GONE CRAZY...
THE INVISIBLE WOMAN IS A SUPER-HERO!
SHE WOULDN'T BE DOING THIS WITHOUT A REASON...
BUT... BUT THAT'S STILL NORM. STILL MY HUSBAND.
WHATEVER HAS HAPPENED TO HIM, I'VE GOT TO HELP HIM!
MY... FIRES...?
THERE'S ONLY ONE VILLAIN WHO'S EVER COMPLIMENTED ME ON MY "FIRES."
I ONLY PRAY TO HEAVEN I'M DOING THE RIGHT THING!!
SKA
RA
SH
OOHH!!
NORM! NORMIE! OH, BABY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? IT'S ME, NORM. IT'S PEG!
YOU'VE GOTTA SNAP OUT OF IT!
I KNOW FULL WELL WHO YOU ARE, PEGGY MACARTHUR. AND I... THANK YOU.
YOU HAVE BEEN USEFUL, AND THUS I SHALL ALLOW YOU TO DEPART. ALIVE.
N-NORM, DON'T TALK LIKE THAT! IT'S SCARY!
I NEED NO HELP NOW, WOMAN.
C'MON, WE CAN FIND YOU A DOCTOR. GET YOU SOME KINDA HELP...
CAN IT BE THAT YOU STILL HAVE NOT GUESSED THE TRUTH? I AM NOT YOUR HUSBAND, PEGGY MACARTHUR. I ONLY WEAR HIS SHELL...
AND WITHIN...

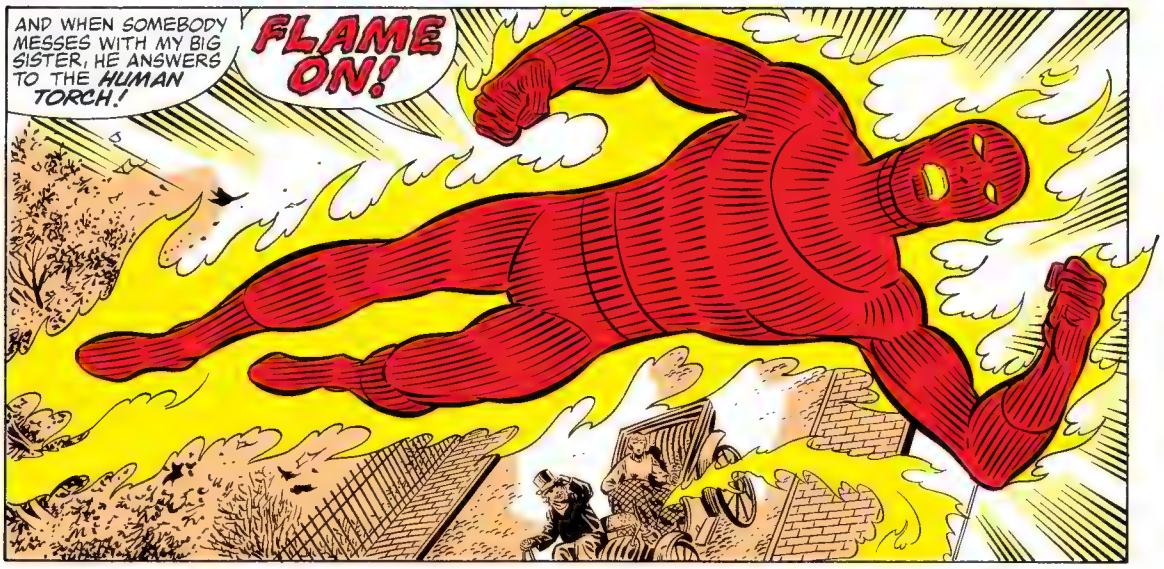
I AM THE REAL
DOCTOR DOOM!
...N-NO...!!
"YES, PEGGY MACARTHUR! YOUR HUSBAND WAS ONE OF THE HUNDREDS WHO WATCHED IN AWE AS I BATTLED TERRAX, MONTHS AGO.*
"I HAD GIVEN TERRAX HIS POWERS, BUT HE HAD TURNED AGAINST ME.
*IN FF #260!
"A WIELDER OF THE POWER COSMIC, TERRAX FUSED MY ARMOR, LEAVING ME IMMOBILIZED. TRAPPED.
"UNTIL I USED THE MIND TRANSFERRAL POWER I HAD LEARNED FROM THE ALIEN OVOIDS, AND ONCE USED TO ASSUME THE FORM OF MISTER FANTASTIC.*
*IN FF #10!!
"THUS, WHEN TERRAX FELL FROM THE SKY, DEFEATED BY THE SILVER SURFER, ALTHOUGH IT WAS MY OWN TRUE BODY THAT WAS ATOMIZED IN THE BLAST...

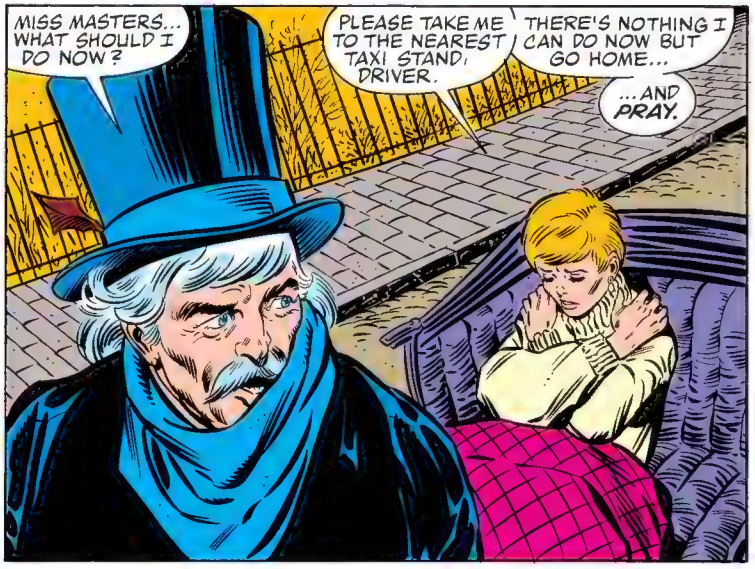
IT WAS YOUR HUSBAND WHO PERISHED!
NO!
NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!
SILENCE, FOOLISH WOMAN! DOOM HAS NO TIME FOR SUCH OUTBURSTS!
AFTER ASSUMING YOUR HUSBAND'S FORM I CAME AT ONCE TO MY EMBASSY. BUT I WAS BARRED ENTRY.
ALL MY SECURITY SYSTEMS WERE KEYED TO MY TRUE BODY.
EVEN VERBAL CODE-WORDS WERE USELESS WHEN SPOKEN WITH THIS VOICE.
SO I LOOKED AT THE WALLET OF MY NEW BODY AND LEARNED WHO HE WAS AND WHERE HE HAD LIVED.
I REALIZED I WOULD NEED A BASE FROM WHICH TO FORMULATE MY PLANS, AND HIS FORMER ABODE WOULD SUFFICE.
AND IT WAS THERE I REALIZED MY BEST AVENUE OF RETURN WOULD BE TO TRICK THE FANTASTIC FOUR THEMSELVES INTO BREACHING THE EMBASSY!
WITH MY GUIDANCE THEIR POWERS WERE SUFFICIENT TO GET ME INSIDE; WHERE I CAN NOW REPROGRAM THE COMPUTER SYSTEMS...
...TO OBEY THIS FORM, UNTIL I CAN REGAIN MY REAL BODY.
...REGAIN YOUR REAL...?
OF COURSE. DO YOU THINK I WISH TO REMAIN IN THIS BODY FOREVER?
I AM A PRISONER IN THIS LUMP OF FLESH, PEGGY MACARTHUR. I INTEND TO ESCAPE IT.
BUT FIRST I SHALL COMPLETE WHAT I HAVE BEGUN HERE.
LIKE HER TEAMMATES SUSAN RICHARDS CARRIES A SIGNAL DEVICE WITHIN HER BELT BUCKLE.
I WILL NOW USE IT TO SUMMON THE REST OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR. AND WHEN THEY ARRIVE...


"...I SHALL AT LAST DESTROY THEM!"
OH, JOHNNY, EVERYTHING HAS JUST BEEN SO WONDERFUL FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS.
YEAH. I CAN'T REMEMBER A TIME WHEN IT'S BEEN MORE PERFECT.
ONLY... ALICIA, I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THERE'S SOMETHING TROUBLING YOU.
TROUBLING? NO. NO, NOT REALLY, DARLING. IT'S TRUE I SOMETIMES FEEL A SMALL SADNESS...
BUT IT'S DEEP INSIDE, AND NOT SURPRISING.
SOMETHING ABOUT US? SOMETHING WRONG ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP?
OH, NO, NO! DON'T EVER THINK THAT, JOHNNY. I'VE NEVER BEEN HAPPIER.
YOU'VE LOST ME ON THAT ONE, BABE.
BUT IN A FUNNY SORT OF WAY IT'S THAT VERY HAPPINESS THAT MAKES ME SAD...
SOMETIMES WHEN WE KISS, WHEN WE TOUCH, I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK OF BEN...
...OF THE FEELINGS HE AND I ONCE HELD FOR EACH OTHER. FEELINGS WE COULD NEVER EXPRESS AS YOU AND I EXPRESS THEM. BECAUSE HE IS TRAPPED FOREVER IN THE BODY OF THE THING.
AND IT IS THAT WHICH TOUCHES A SMALL, SAD SPOT IN MY HEART. ALMOST A NOSTALGIA. BUT A NOSTALGIA FOR SOMETHING THAT NEVER REALLY WAS.
I'M... GLAD TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT, ALICIA.
WE'VE ALL BEEN MISSING BEN A LOT. SINCE HE QUIT THE F.F. I'VE BEEN AFRAID HE MIGHT BE SOMEHOW... KIND OF STANDING BETWEEN US STILL...

NO, JOHNNY. I STILL CHERISH WHAT BEN AND I ONCE HAD, BUT HE BELONGS NOW TO MY PAST. MY PRESENT, MY FUTURE... THEY BELONG TO US.
THEN... I HAVE SOMETHING TO ASK YOU. I STARTED ONCE BEFORE AND GOT INTERRUPTED. THIS TIME I...
BEEP! BEEP!





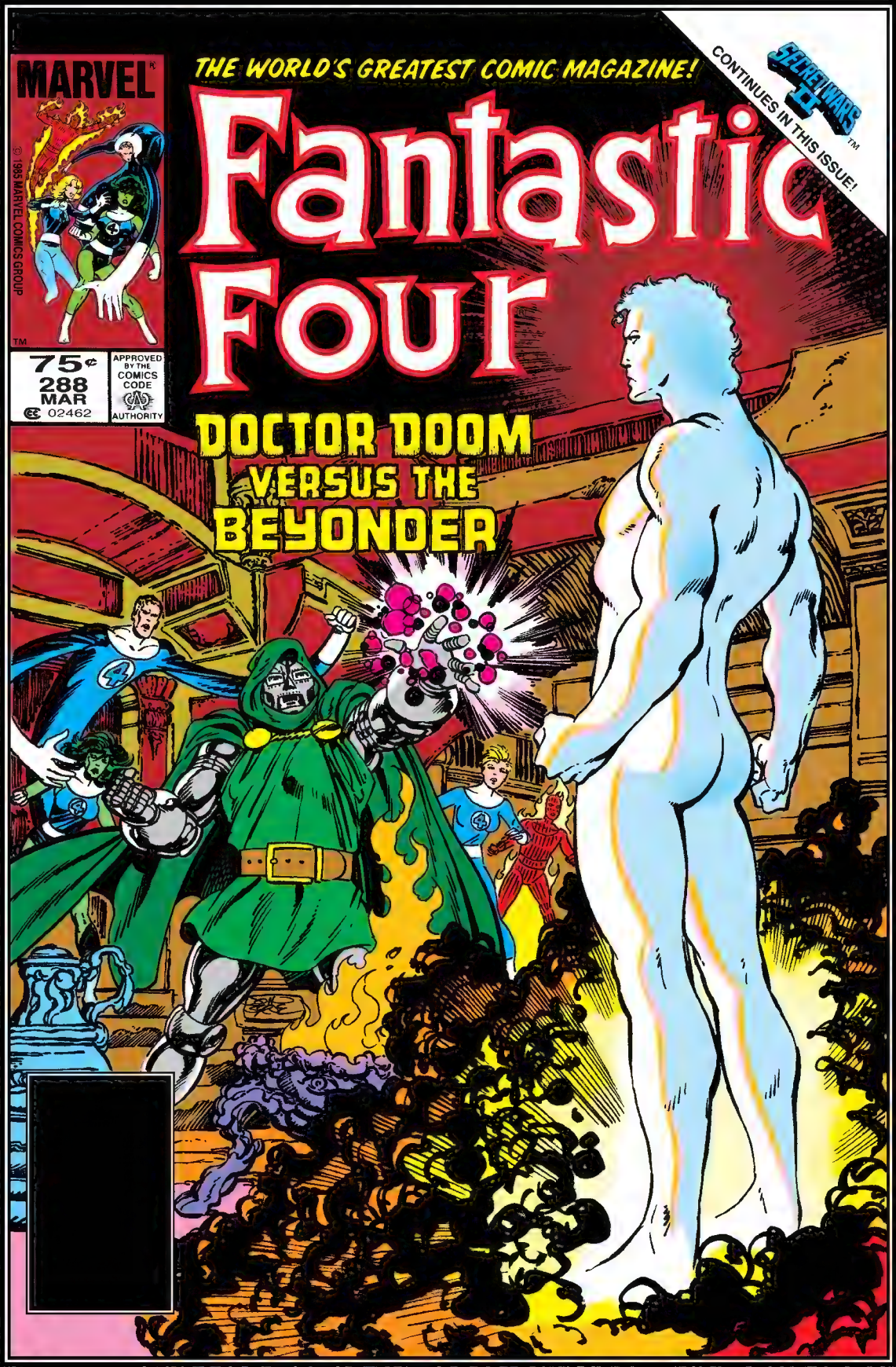

MISS MASTERS... WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?
PLEASE TAKE ME TO THE NEAREST TAXI STAND, DRIVER.
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO NOW BUT GO HOME...
...AND PRAY.

NEXT ISSUE!

DOCTOR DOOM'S TRAP IS SET. WILL THE FANTASTIC FOUR FALL INTO IT?

FOR THE STUNNING ANSWER DON'T MISS OUR NEXT TITANIC TALE AS THE BEYONDER RETURNS IN A SECRET WARS II CROSS-OVER WE HAD TO CALL...

FULL CIRCLE!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Fantastic Four
SECRET WARS II
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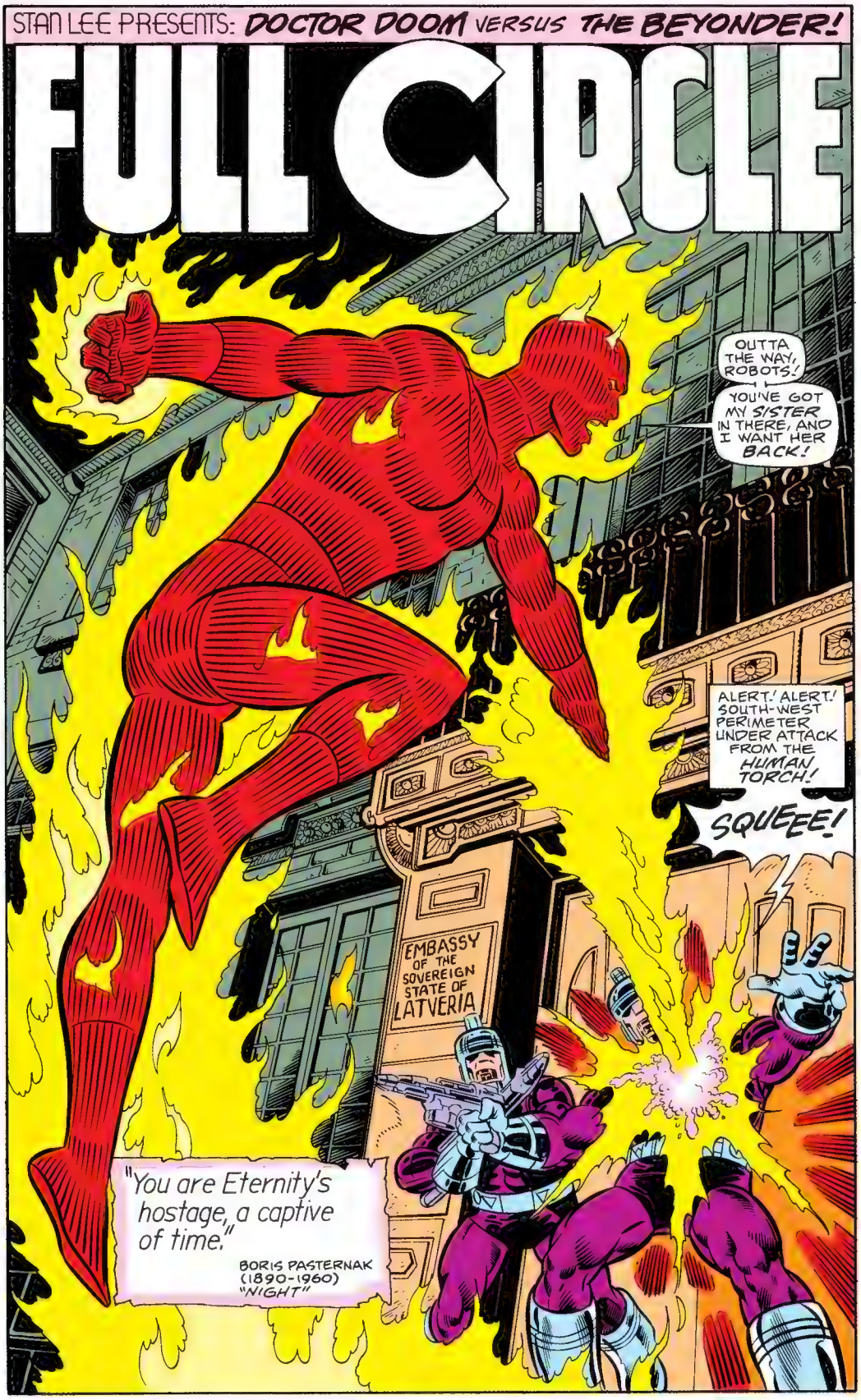
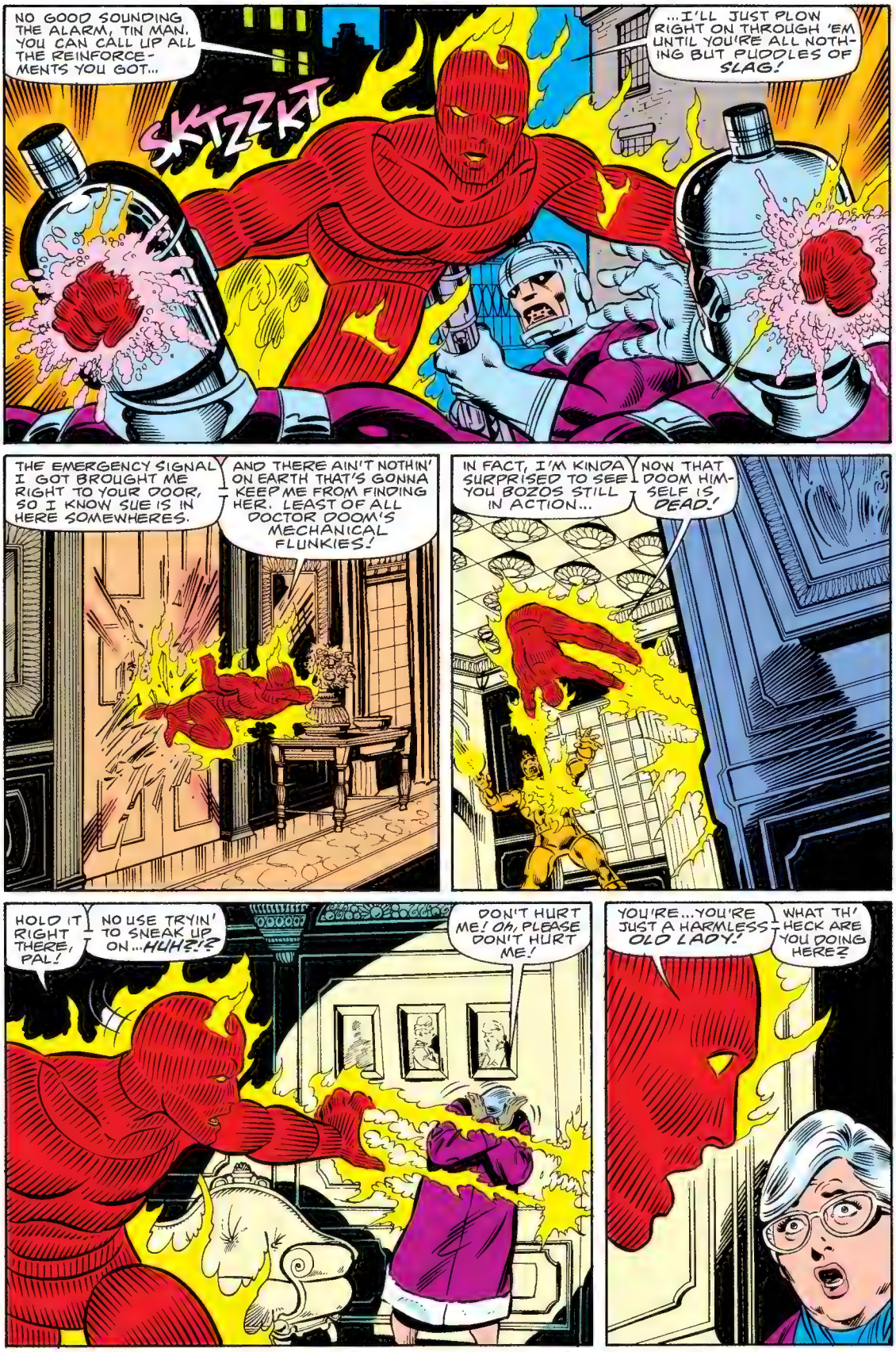
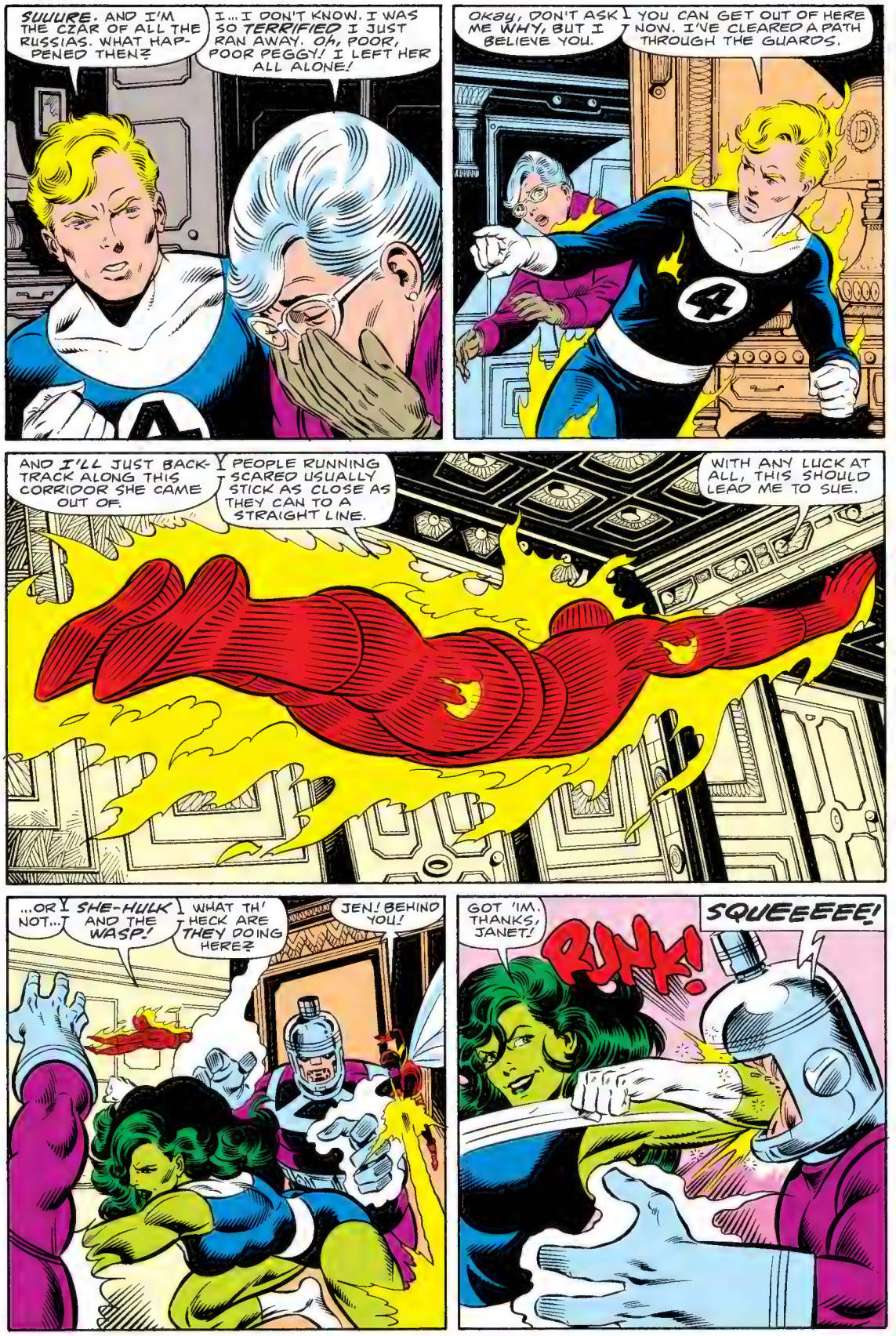

STAN LEE PRESENTS: DOCTOR DOOM VERSUS THE BEYONDER!
FULL CIRCLE
OUTTA THE WAY, ROBOTS!
YOU'VE GOT MY SISTER IN THERE, AND I WANT HER BACK!
ALERT! ALERT! SOUTH-WEST PERIMETER UNDER ATTACK FROM THE HUMAN TORCH!
SQUEEE!
EMBASSY OF THE SOVEREIGN STATE OF LATVERIA
"You are Eternity's hostage, a captive of time."
BORIS PASTERNAK (1890-1960) "NIGHT"

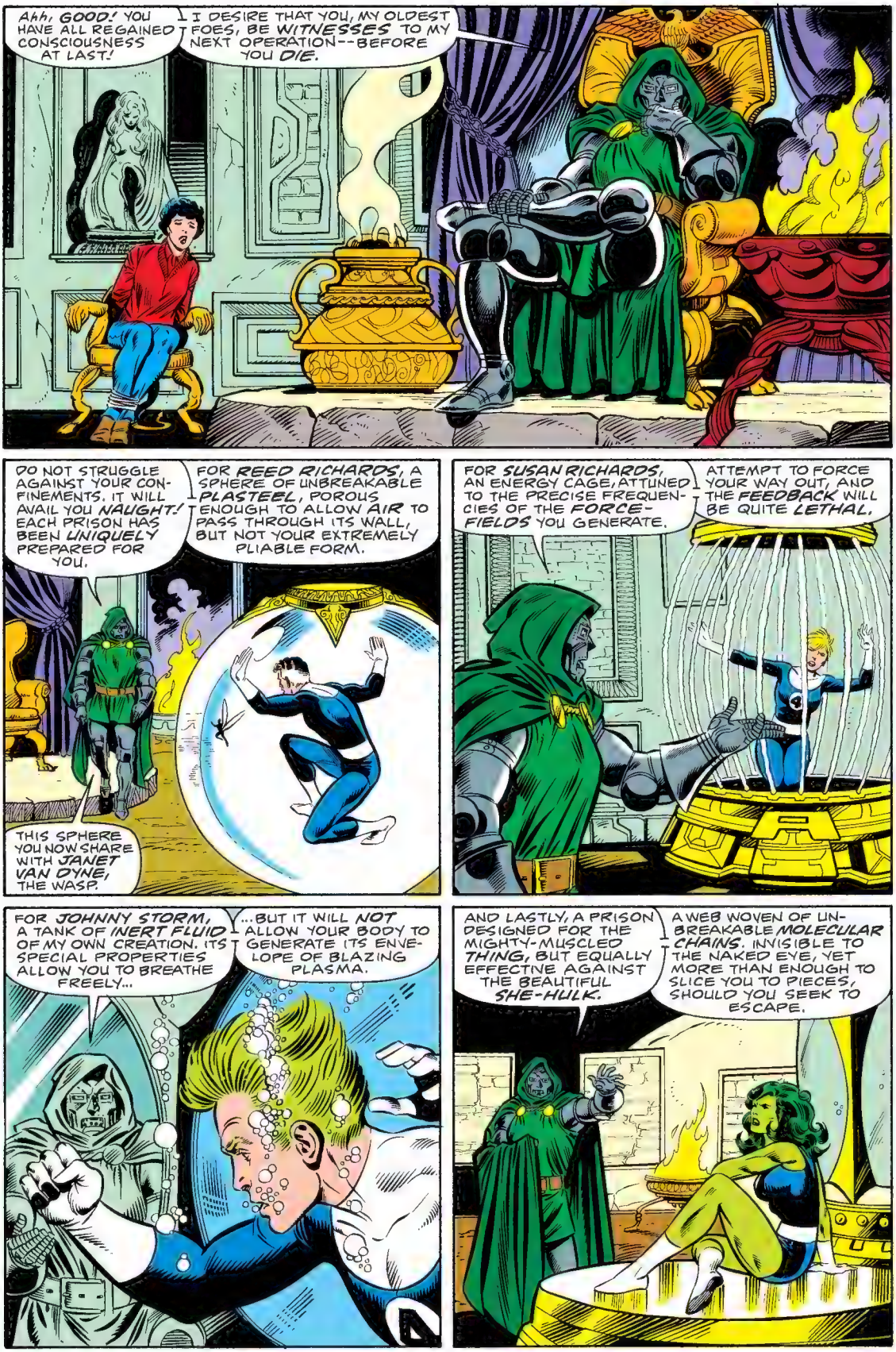

NO GOOD SOUNDING THE ALARM, TIN MAN. YOU CAN CALL UP ALL THE REINFORCE-MENTS YOU GOT...
SKTZZKT
...I'LL JUST PLOW RIGHT ON THROUGH 'EM UNTIL YOU'RE ALL NOTHING BUT PUDDLES OF SLAG!
THE EMERGENCY SIGNAL I GOT BROUGHT ME RIGHT TO YOUR DOOR, SO I KNOW SUE IS IN HERE SOMEWHERES.
AND THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' ON EARTH THAT'S GONNA KEEP ME FROM FINDING HER. LEAST OF ALL DOCTOR DOOM'S MECHANICAL FLUNKIES!
IN FACT, I'M KINDA SURPRISED TO SEE YOU BOZOS STILL IN ACTION...
NOW THAT DOOM HIMSELF IS DEAD!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, PAL!
NO USE TRYIN' TO SNEAK UP ON...HUH?!?
DON'T HURT ME! OH, PLEASE DON'T HURT ME!
YOU'RE...YOU'RE JUST A HARMLESS OLD LADY!
WHAT TH' HECK ARE YOU DOING HERE?

Oh...oh, PLEASE, MISTER STORM! JUST LET ME GET OUT OF THIS AWFUL PLACE! JUST LET ME GO HOME!
IN A MINUTE. FIRST, TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON HERE. HAVE YOU SEEN MY SISTER?
YES... BUT I'M NOT SURE WHERE SHE IS NOW. EVERYTHING HAS GONE CRAZY! IT WAS ONLY TWO HOURS AGO MY NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR CAME KNOCKING AT MY DOOR...
PEGGY!
S-SARAH... HELP US!!
"NO ONE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAD SEEN ANYTHING OF PEGGY IN WEEKS. NOW SHE TOLD ME HER HUSBAND HAD BEEN HOLDING HER PRISONER IN HER OWN HOUSE!
"BUT, SHE SAID HE WASN'T TALKING LIKE HER HUSBAND... THAT HE HAD SOME STRANGE GERMAN ACCENT. AND THEN JUST YESTERDAY SHE FOUND HIM MAKING SOME KIND OF COSTUME..."
THE TIME IS RIPE FOR ME TO STRIKE!
"JUST AS SHE FINISHED, WE SAW ON THE NEWS THAT A MAN WEARING THAT VERY COSTUME WAS ATTACKING THE LATVERIAN EMBASSY."
THAT'S HIM! THAT'S NORM!
"WE CAME DOWN HERE AND SAW PEG'S HUSBAND FIGHTING YOUR SISTER, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN... AND SHE WAS WINNING!
"PEGGY COULDN'T BEAR THE THOUGHT OF HER NORM GETTING HURT, SO SHE SNUCK UP BEHIND MRS. RICHARDS AND..."
I ONLY PRAY TO GOD I'M DOING THE RIGHT THING!
SKA-RASH!
OOHH!
"THAT WAS WHEN NORM PULLED OFF HIS OUTER MASK AND SAID HE WAS THE REAL DOCTOR DOOM!"


SUUURE. AND I'M THE CZAR OF ALL THE RUSSIAS. WHAT HAPPENED THEN?
I... I DON'T KNOW. I WAS SO TERRIFIED I JUST RAN AWAY. Oh, POOR, POOR PEGGY! I LEFT HER ALL ALONE!
OKAY, DON'T ASK ME WHY, BUT I BELIEVE YOU.
YOU CAN GET OUT OF HERE NOW. I'VE CLEARED A PATH THROUGH THE GUARDS.
AND I'LL JUST BACK-TRACK ALONG THIS CORRIDOR SHE CAME OUT OF.
PEOPLE RUNNING SCARED USUALLY STICK AS CLOSE AS THEY CAN TO A STRAIGHT LINE.
WITH ANY LUCK AT ALL, THIS SHOULD LEAD ME TO SUE.
...OR NOT... SHE-HULK AND THE WASP!
WHAT TH' HECK ARE THEY DOING HERE?
JEN! BEHIND YOU!
GOT 'IM. THANKS, JANET!
RUNK!
SQUEEEEE!

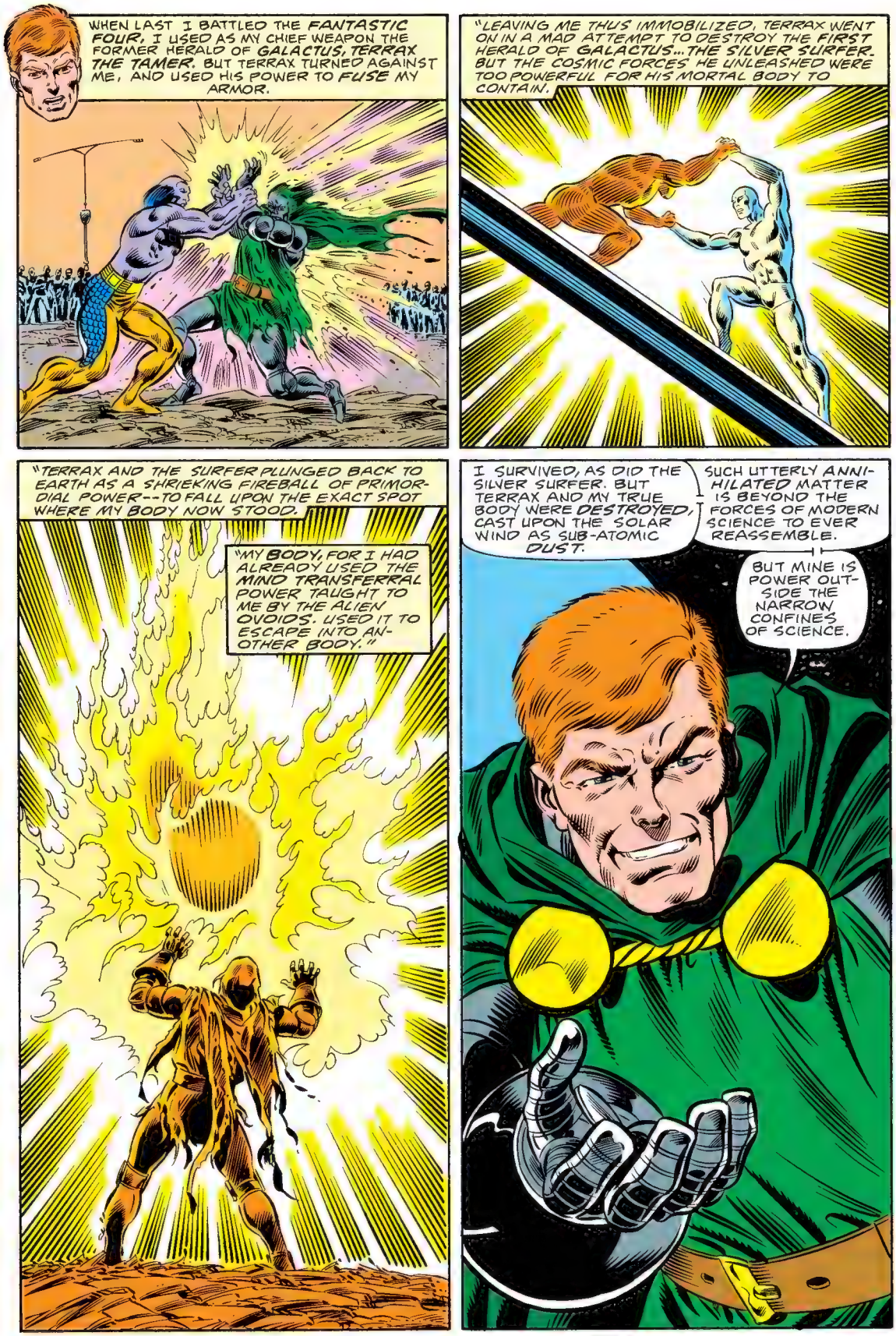
EXCELLENT WORK, SHE-HULK! YOU CONTINUE TO ACQUIT YOURSELF ADMIRABLY!
REED! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SQUEEEE!
RESPONDING TO MY WIFE'S EMERGENCY SIGNAL, OF COURSE. ALTHOUGH YOU TWO DON'T SEEM IN MUCH NEED OF MY ASSISTANCE.
WHERE IS SUSAN?
BEATS ME. SHE TOOK OFF AFTER THE GUY WE BUSTED IN HERE WITH.
THANKS, REED.
THAT WOULD BE THE INDIVIDUAL DRESSED AS THE *INVINCIBLE MAN*? I MONITORED THE TELEVISION NEWSCASTS ON THE WAY HERE.
THAT'S THE GUY.
HE SNUCK OFF JUST AFTER WE BREACHED THE EMBASSY'S OUTER DEFENSES.
AND SUE WENT AFTER HIM *ALONE*? WHY DIDN'T ONE OF YOU GO WITH HER?
JOHNNY. YOU RECEIVED SUSAN'S CALL, TOO?
GREAT! LET'S POLISH OFF THE REST OF THESE ROBOZOS. WE CAN SING A CHORUS OF "HAIL, HAIL, THE GANG'S ALL HERE" LATER.
IF YOU *HAVE* A "LATER."
I ADMIRE YOUR POWER AND EXTRAORDINARY SENSUALITY, SHE-HULK. A PITY THAT OUR *FIRST* MEETING...

...SHALL ALSO BE OUR LAST!
DOOM!
UNGH!!
CONCUSSION RAY! SHE-HULK, ONLY YOU CAN...
Uhhhh-hh
4
4
Ohh-hhh
I FEEL LIKE... A FOOTBALL UNDER A PILE OF PLAYERS IN THE ELEPHANT SUPERBOWL.
BUT...CAN'T LET IT...STOP ME...
OTHERS... OUT COLD..
I ONLY ...MY ...MY STRENGTH TO KEEP ME...
...GOINNNGG...
MAGNIFICENT!


Ahh, GOOD! YOU HAVE ALL REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS AT LAST!
I DESIRE THAT YOU, MY OLDEST FOES, BE WITNESSES TO MY NEXT OPERATION--BEFORE YOU DIE.
DO NOT STRUGGLE AGAINST YOUR CONFINEMENTS. IT WILL AVAIL YOU NAUGHT! EACH PRISON HAS BEEN UNIQUELY PREPARED FOR YOU.
FOR REED RICHARDS, A SPHERE OF UNBREAKABLE PLASTEEL, POROUS ENOUGH TO ALLOW AIR TO PASS THROUGH ITS WALL, BUT NOT YOUR EXTREMELY PLIABLE FORM.
THIS SPHERE YOU NOW SHARE WITH JANET VAN DYNE, THE WASP.
FOR SUSAN RICHARDS, AN ENERGY CAGE, ATTUNED TO THE PRECISE FREQUENCIES OF THE FORCE-FIELDS YOU GENERATE.
ATTEMPT TO FORCE YOUR WAY OUT, AND THE FEEDBACK WILL BE QUITE LETHAL.
FOR JOHNNY STORM, A TANK OF INERT FLUID OF MY OWN CREATION. ITS SPECIAL PROPERTIES ALLOW YOU TO BREATHE FREELY...
...BUT IT WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR BODY TO GENERATE ITS ENVELOPE OF BLAZING PLASMA.
AND LASTLY, A PRISON DESIGNED FOR THE MIGHTY-MUSCLED THING, BUT EQUALLY EFFECTIVE AGAINST THE BEAUTIFUL SHE-HULK.
A WEB WOVEN OF UNBREAKABLE MOLECULAR CHAINS. INVISIBLE TO THE NAKED EYE, YET MORE THAN ENOUGH TO SLICE YOU TO PIECES, SHOULD YOU SEEK TO ESCAPE.

Oh, come off it, Doom! You can do better than THAT! You don't really expect me to believe there's a...
OW!!
WHAT IN THE...?!?
CONSIDER YOURSELF FORTUNATE, She-Hulk. Had you not been able to STOP yourself...
...you might well have cut right through your arm! Not even your nearly indestructable skin will protect you here.
ALL RIGHT, Doom, enough threats. We've heard it all too many times before.
WHAT'S THIS "OPERATION" you're so keen to have us witness? And, for that matter, why should we believe you to be the TRUE Victor Von Doom, and not just another of his robot doubles?
YES, THE LAST WE KNEW, Doom was DEAD.
A DEATH I witnessed with my own eyes!
DID YOU, Susan?
WHAT YOU SAW WAS THE DEATH OF MY BODY. MY MIND SURVIVES...
...TRANSFERRED INTO THE BODY OF A BYSTANDER AT THE SITE OF MY "DEATH."
MY HUSBAND'S BODY! PLEASE... MISTER FANTASTIC! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE MOST BRILLIANT SCIENTIST ALIVE!
DO SOMETHING! PLEASE!!
"...MOST BRILLIANT...?"
MOST BRILLIANT?!?!?

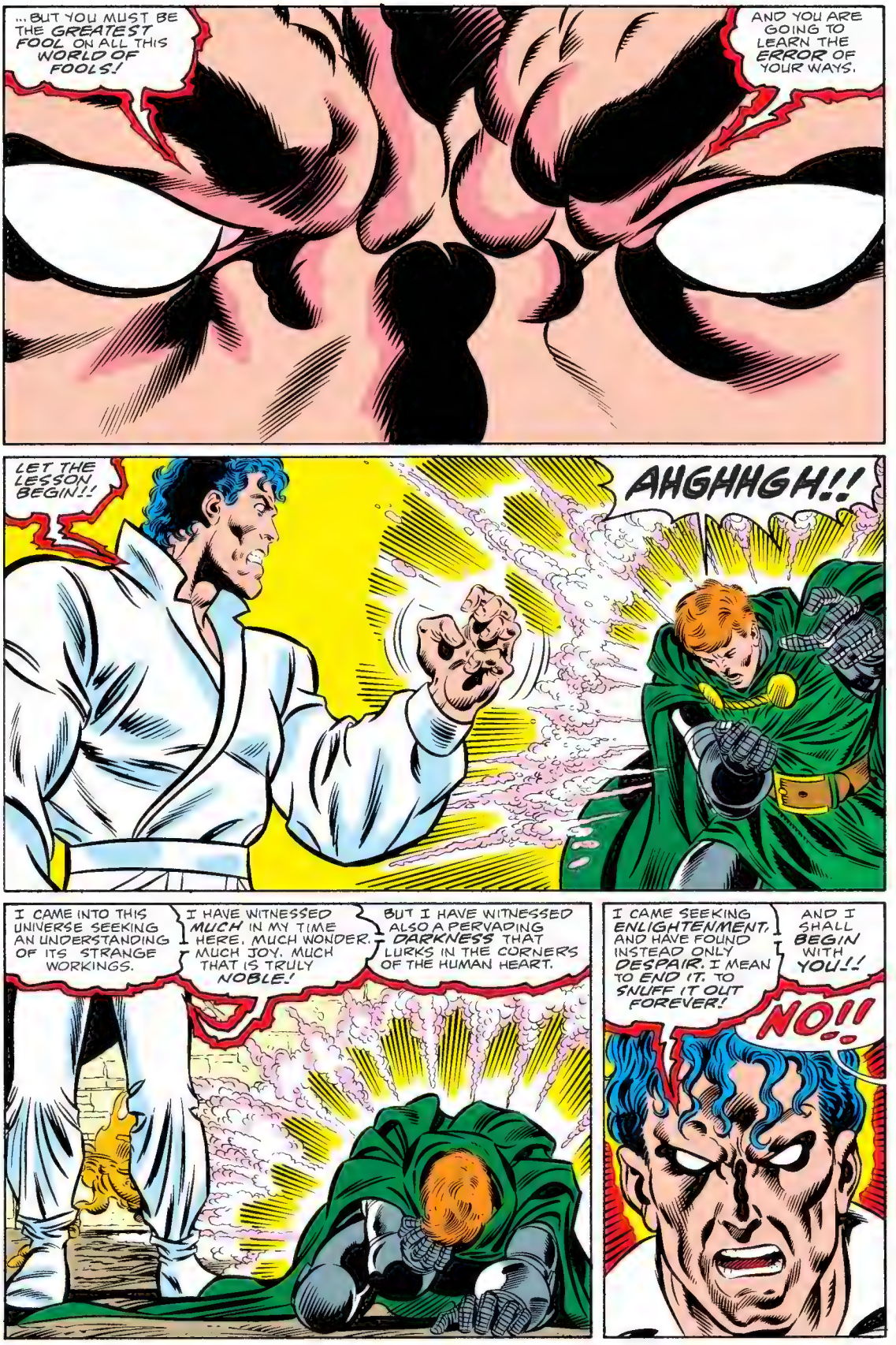
NO ONE IS MORE BRILLIANT THAN DOOM!
NO ONE!
Oh-HH!
PATHETIC FEMALE! I HAVE ALLOWED YOU TO LIVE ONLY BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN OF USE TO ME OVER THE PAST MONTHS, NOW...
...YOU REPAY MY KINDNESS WITH INSULTS! I SHOULD SNUFF YOU OUT LIKE THE INSIGNIFICANT MATCH YOU--
DOOM!!
DOOM, WHAT END WILL IT SERVE TO MURDER THIS POOR WOMAN?
IS THIS HOW YOU DEMONSTRATE YOUR GREAT POWER, YOUR SUPPOSED SUPERIORITY? BY SLAUGHTERING THOSE TOO WEAK TO FIGHT BACK?
FOR ONCE YOU ARE RIGHT, MY OLD FOE. SUCH AN ACT IS INDEED BENEATH THE HAND OF DOOM.
BUT, LOOK YOU THERE, PEGGY McARTHUR. LOOK, AND TELL ME WHOSE IS THE MOST BRILLIANT OF ALL INTELLECTS!
I...I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M LOOKING AT...?
OF COURSE YOU DON'T. HOW COULD YOU?
DOOM COMMANDS POWERS BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION. ANCIENT POWERS. POWERS OUT OF DARKNESS AND LEGEND!

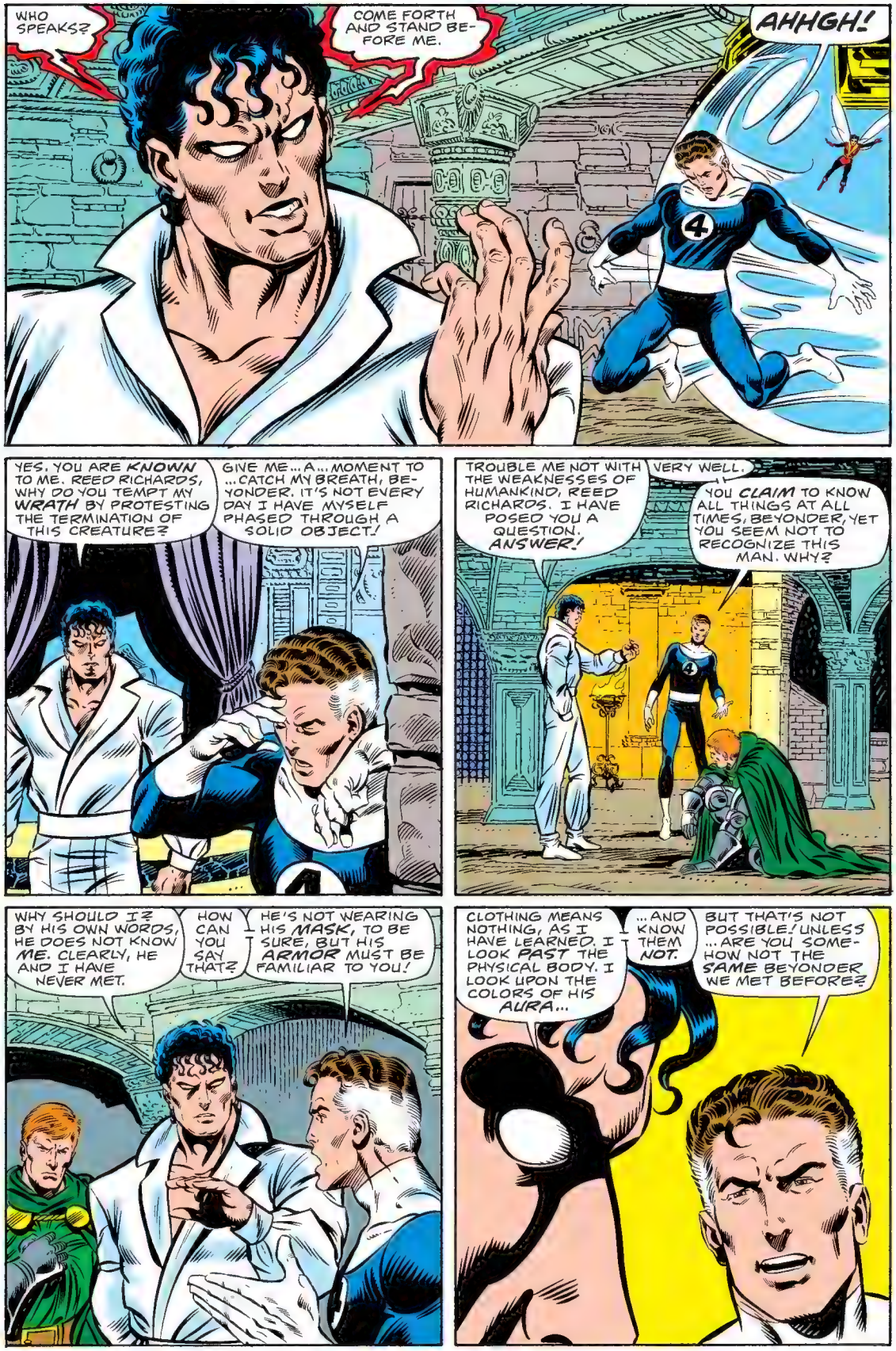

WHEN LAST I BATTLED THE FANTASTIC FOUR, I USED AS MY CHIEF WEAPON THE FORMER HERALD OF GALACTUS, TERRAX THE TAMER. BUT TERRAX TURNED AGAINST ME, AND USED HIS POWER TO FUSE MY ARMOR.
"LEAVING ME THUS IMMOBILIZED, TERRAX WENT ON IN A MAD ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE FIRST HERALD OF GALACTUS...THE SILVER SURFER. BUT THE COSMIC FORCES HE UNLEASHED WERE TOO POWERFUL FOR HIS MORTAL BODY TO CONTAIN.
"TERRAX AND THE SURFER PLUNGED BACK TO EARTH AS A SHRIEKING FIREBALL OF PRIMORDIAL POWER--TO FALL UPON THE EXACT SPOT WHERE MY BODY NOW STOOD.
"MY BODY, FOR I HAD ALREADY USED THE MIND TRANSFERRAL POWER TAUGHT TO ME BY THE ALIEN OVOIDS. USED IT TO ESCAPE INTO ANOTHER BODY."
I SURVIVED, AS DID THE SILVER SURFER. BUT TERRAX AND MY TRUE BODY WERE DESTROYED, CAST UPON THE SOLAR WIND AS SUB-ATOMIC DUST.
SUCH UTTERLY ANNIHILATED MATTER IS BEYOND THE FORCES OF MODERN SCIENCE TO EVER REASSEMBLE.
BUT MINE IS POWER OUTSIDE THE NARROW CONFINES OF SCIENCE.

HERE, IN THE DEEPEST CELLARS OF MY LATVERIAN EMBASSY, I HAVE MARSHALLED THE FORCES OF BLACK MAGIC--THOSE SAME FORCES ONCE CONJURED BY MY MOTHER, A TRUE WITCH!
THE FLAMES OF FALROTH WILL SPREAD THEIR MYSTIC STRANDS ACROSS THE COSMOS, AND GATHER TOGETHER THE SCATTERED PARTICLES OF MY BODY.
AND I SHALL BE ONCE AGAIN MADE WHOLE!
DOOM MUST BE RESTORED TO HIS OWN BODY, SCARRED THOUGH IT MAY BE BY OLD BETRAYALS.
FOR IT IS BENEATH THE DIGNITY OF THE RIGHTFUL MONARCH OF LATVERIA TO ALLOW HIS SPIRIT TO LONG RESIDE IN THE BODY OF A COMMONER!
BUT...WHAT IS THIS? THE FLAMES FALTER. EVEN THEIR ARCANE MIGHT IS INSUFFICIENT FOR THE TASK AT HAND.
I MUST RE-SHAPE THE SPELL!
I MUST REACH OUT TO THE FARTHEST CORNERS OF SPACE AND TIME TO SUMMON GREATER POWER, THE GREATEST POWER IN THE UNIVERSE!
"GREATEST POWER...??" Omigosh! YOU DON'T SUPPOSE...
NO! REED, SURELY THAT CAN'T HAPPEN...?
CAN IT?
IT ALREADY HAS, DARLING. DOOM HAS SUCCEEDED IN HIS MAD QUEST.
HE HAS DRAWN TO THIS PLACE THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF SUPREME POWER!

"THE BEYONDER!!"
"BUT... HE LOOKS CHANGED FROM WHEN LAST WE ENCOUNTERED HIM. HE LOOKS... ANGRY!"
WHO HAS DARED BRING ME HERE?

HAVE A CARE, SLAVE! YOU WOULD DO WELL TO GUARD THE MANNER OF YOUR SPEECH IN THE PRESENCE OF YOUR MASTER!
"...SLAVE...?"
"...MASTER...?"
OF COURSE! IT IS I WHO HAVE BROUGHT YOU HERE. IT IS I WHO SHALL COMMAND YOUR OBEDIENCE!
UNGH!
HE'S STAGGERED HIM! THE BEYONDER WAS JUST CONFUSED ENOUGH BY WHAT'S HAPPENING...
...THAT DOOM WAS ABLE TO CATCH HIM OFF GUARD WITH A MYSTICAL BOLT!
BUT... BUT, REED, SURELY EVEN DOCTOR DOOM DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST THE BEYONDER?!?
HE DID ONCE, DARLING! IN FACT, IN THEIR LAST ENCOUNTER, DOOM WAS ACTUALLY ABLE TO STEAL THE BEYONDER'S POWER AND WIELD IT HIMSELF!
NOW, LOOK! IS HE BOWING TO DOOM, OR...??
MORTAL, I KNOW NOT WHO YOU ARE...


...BUT YOU MUST BE THE GREATEST FOOL ON ALL THIS WORLD OF FOOLS!
AND YOU ARE GOING TO LEARN THE ERROR OF YOUR WAYS.
LET THE LESSON BEGIN!!
AHGHHGH!!
I CAME INTO THIS UNIVERSE SEEKING AN UNDERSTANDING OF ITS STRANGE WORKINGS.
I HAVE WITNESSED MUCH IN MY TIME HERE. MUCH WONDER. MUCH JOY. MUCH THAT IS TRULY NOBLE!
BUT I HAVE WITNESSED ALSO A PERVADING DARKNESS THAT LURKS IN THE CORNERS OF THE HUMAN HEART.
I CAME SEEKING ENLIGHTENMENT, AND HAVE FOUND INSTEAD ONLY DESPAIR. I MEAN TO END IT. TO SNUFF IT OUT FOREVER!
AND I SHALL BEGIN WITH YOU!!
NO!!

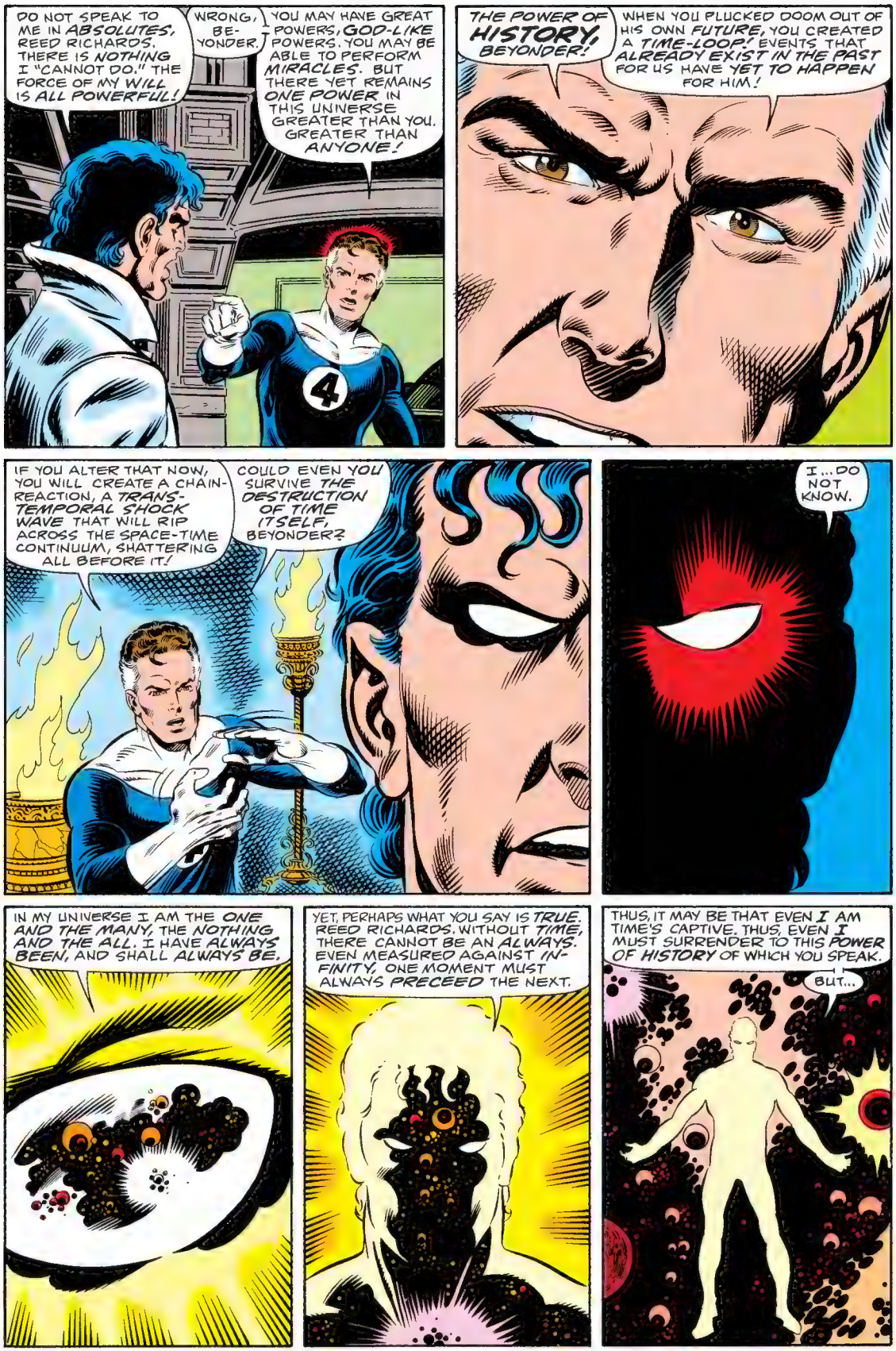

WHO SPEAKS?
COME FORTH AND STAND BEFORE ME.
AHHGH!
YES, YOU ARE KNOWN TO ME. REED RICHARDS, WHY DO YOU TEMPT MY WRATH BY PROTESTING THE TERMINATION OF THIS CREATURE?
GIVE ME... A... MOMENT TO ...CATCH MY BREATH, BEYONDER. IT'S NOT EVERY DAY I HAVE MYSELF PHASED THROUGH A SOLID OBJECT!
TROUBLE ME NOT WITH THE WEAKNESSES OF HUMANKIND, REED RICHARDS. I HAVE POSED YOU A QUESTION. ANSWER!
VERY WELL.
YOU CLAIM TO KNOW ALL THINGS AT ALL TIMES, BEYONDER, YET YOU SEEM NOT TO RECOGNIZE THIS MAN. WHY?
WHY SHOULD I? BY HIS OWN WORDS, HE DOES NOT KNOW ME. CLEARLY, HE AND I HAVE NEVER MET.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?
HE'S NOT WEARING HIS MASK, TO BE SURE, BUT HIS ARMOR MUST BE FAMILIAR TO YOU!
CLOTHING MEANS NOTHING, AS I HAVE LEARNED. I LOOK PAST THE PHYSICAL BODY. I LOOK UPON THE COLORS OF HIS AURA...
...AND KNOW THEM NOT.
BUT THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE! UNLESS ...ARE YOU SOMEHOW NOT THE SAME BEYONDER WE MET BEFORE?

NOT THE SAME BEYONDER WHO, MERE MONTHS AGO, KIDNAPPED SOME OF EARTH'S MOST POWERFUL BEINGS...
...TRANSPORTING US ACROSS TIME AND SPACE TO A DISTANT WORLD OF HIS OWN CREATION, THERE TO SET US IN BATTLE AGAINST EACH OTHER.
NOT THE SAME BEYONDER WHO WATCHED, STUDYING AS TERRIBLE CONFLICTS TORE AND RESHAPED THE SURFACE OF THAT ERSATZ WORLD.
AS HEROES AND VILLAINS CLASHED, TO DIE AND BE REBORN IN A SEEMINGLY UNENDING NIGHTMARE WHOSE TRUE PURPOSE LAY ALWAYS JUST BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION.
"UNTIL ONE MAN, DRIVEN BY ANCIENT MADNESS, DARED TAKE FOR HIMSELF WHAT NO SANE HUMAN EVER WOULD--UNTIL DOCTOR DOOM STOLE THE NEARLY INFINITE POWER OF A LIVING FORCE OF NATURE, HE WHO IS CALLED GALACTUS!
"AND, WITH THAT LIMITLESS POWER AT HIS COMMAND, LAUNCHED AN ATTACK AGAINST THE ENTITY KNOWN AS THE BEYONDER.

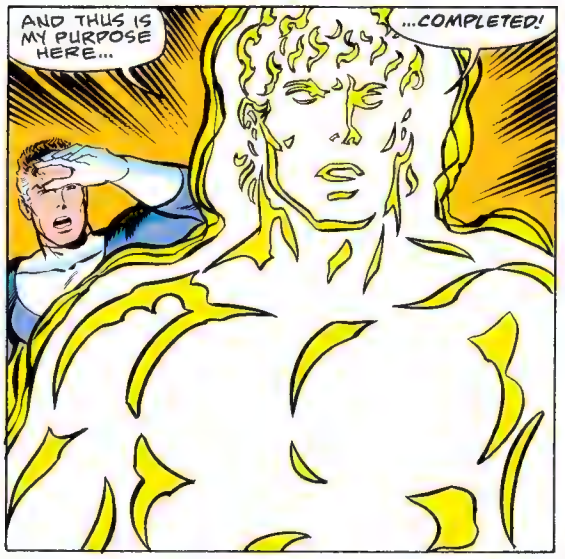
"DOOM ONLY BARELY SURVIVED THAT BATTLE WITH THE BEYONDER. BUT DEATH, WE HAD ALREADY LEARNED, WAS NOT THE SAME FORCE IN THAT STRANGE REALM AS IT HAD BEEN AT HOME.
"TORN LITERALLY LIMB FROM LIMB, DOOM STILL WAS NOT FINISHED.
"NOT YET.
"THUS, BY SHEER FORCE OF HIS OWN WILL, WAS DOOM STILL ABLE TO TRIUMPH! WITH HIS LAST BREATH, HE TRIGGERED A DEVICE IN HIS ARMOR, WHICH, USING TECHNOLOGY TAKEN FROM GALACTUS, DRAINED THE BEYONDER'S POWER!"
"IN THAT MOMENT, HE WAS REMADE... REBORN! HE RETURNED TO STAND AMONGST US AS SOMETHING VERY LIKE A GOD!"
THE BEYONDER IS DEAD! NOW THE SUPREME BEING IN THE UNIVERSE...
...IS DOOM!
"BUT A MAD GOD, INSANE HE HAD BEEN AS A HUMAN, MORTAL BEING, AND INSANE HE REMAINED. HE LOST CONTROL OF THE POWER, AND ALL AROUND HIM REALITY ITSELF CRUMBLED.
"AS CAPTAIN AMERICA LOOKED ON, DOOM FOUGHT ONE MORE BATTLE. A BATTLE WITHIN HIMSELF, WITH HIS OWN NEW-FOUND POWER.
"AND AS DOOM WEAKENED, THE BEYONDER STRUCK! HE HAD NOT PERISHED, BUT HIDDEN HIMSELF IN THE BODY OF DOOM'S UNDERLING, KLAW, THE MURDEROUS MASTER OF SOUND.
"NOW THE BEYONDER RECLAIMED HIS POWER, AND BANISHED DOOM AND KLAW TO... I DO NOT KNOW WHERE."

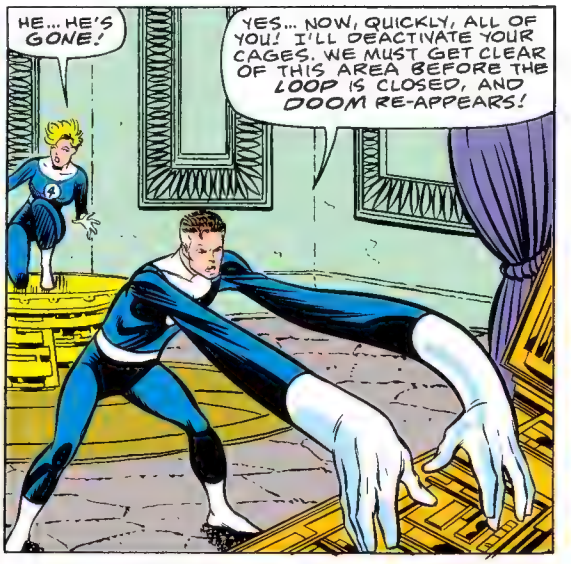
WHAT NONSENSE IS THIS? NO SUCH THINGS HAVE EVER HAPPENED TO...
WHY DO YOU BORE ME WITH STORIES OF THINGS I ALREADY KNOW, REED RICHARDS? OF COURSE I AM THAT SELFSAME BEYONDER!
AND STILL I DO NOT KNOW THIS MAN.
BUT...YOU MUST! UNLESS...
HURGKK!
OF COURSE! THAT'S THE ONLY POSSIBLE ANSWER!
WHEN YOU LAST ENCOUNTERED DOOM, BEYONDER, HE WAS IN HIS TRUE BODY, AND THAT BODY'S AURA IS THE ONE YOU KNOW.
BUT DOOM'S MIND AND PERSONALITY HAVE BEEN TRANSLOCATED INTO ANOTHER BODY, AND THE ELECTRO-CHEMICAL ENERGIES OF THAT OTHER FORM MUST BE DISGUISING HIS AURA.
YOU MUST LOOK DEEPER, BEYONDER. YOU MUST LOOK BEYOND THIS MORTAL FORM...
DO YOU PLAY WITH WORDS, REED RICHARDS? WHAT PURPOSE CAN IT SERVE TO...
?!?
YES!! IT IS HIM!! THE ONE WHO BESTED ME! WHO TREACHEROUSLY TORE MY POWER FROM ME, EVEN AS I SOUGHT TO STUDY, TO AID HIM.
I HAD THOUGHT TO BANISH HIM ACROSS THE REACHES OF TIME AND SPACE, BUT HE HAS CONFOUNDED MY DESIRE.
LET HIM NOW PAY THE PRICE!!

NO!
AGAIN, NO?
I WEARY OF THIS CONSTANT CONTRADICTION, HUMAN.
Yeah! WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, REED?
IF THE BEYONDER ACES DOOM ONCE AND FOR ALL, HE'LL BE DOING THE WHOLE WORLD A FAVOR!
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE, SHE-HULK. NOT THAT SIMPLE AT ALL.
IN THE FIRST PLACE, THERE IS THE LIFE OF NORMAN McARTHUR TO BE CONSIDERED.
AND IN THE SECOND PLACE, I THINK I FINALLY UNDERSTAND ALL THIS CONFUSION. WHY DOOM CLAIMS NEVER TO HAVE SEEN THE BEYONDER BEFORE, AND WHY HE REACTED TO SHE-HULK AS IF THAT, TOO WAS A FIRST MEETING.
WHEN YOU KIDNAPPED US ALL TO YOUR "SECRET WARS," BEYONDER, YOU PLUCKED HEROES AND VILLAINS ALIKE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD --INCLUDING DOOM!
BUT THE DOOM WE ALL BATTLED IN THAT WAR WORE HIS OWN, HIS TRUE BODY, AT A TIME WHEN THAT BODY, AS NOW, WAS UTTERLY DESTROYED.
WHERE DID HE COME FROM, BEYONDER? WAS HE AN ARTIFICIAL DOOM, CREATED BY YOU FROM OUR MEMORIES OF THE ORIGINAL...
OR, AS I NOW SUSPECT, DID YOU LIFT HIM FROM ANOTHER POINT IN THE TIME-STREAM -- A POINT AHEAD OF THE ONE FROM WHICH YOU TOOK THE REST OF US?
THAT IS CORRECT. I READ IN ALL YOUR MINDS THE IMAGE OF DOCTOR DOOM, BUT I COULD NOT FIND HIM ON YOUR TEMPORAL PLANE.
SO I REACHED ACROSS THE CONTINUUM TO A SUITABLE FUTURE POINT, AND BROUGHT THAT DOCTOR DOOM TO THE WORLD I HAD CREATED FOR YOU.
YES. IT ALL FITS.
AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHY YOU CANNOT KILL DOOM NOW, BEYONDER, WHY YOU DARE NOT KILL HIM!!


DO NOT SPEAK TO ME IN ABSOLUTES, REED RICHARDS. THERE IS NOTHING I "CANNOT DO." THE FORCE OF MY WILL IS ALL POWERFUL!
WRONG, BE-YONDER.
YOU MAY HAVE GREAT POWERS, GOD-LIKE POWERS. YOU MAY BE ABLE TO PERFORM MIRACLES. BUT THERE YET REMAINS ONE POWER IN THIS UNIVERSE GREATER THAN YOU. GREATER THAN ANYONE!
THE POWER OF HISTORY, BEYONDER!
WHEN YOU PLUCKED DOOM OUT OF HIS OWN FUTURE, YOU CREATED A TIME-LOOP! EVENTS THAT ALREADY EXIST IN THE PAST FOR US HAVE YET TO HAPPEN FOR HIM!
IF YOU ALTER THAT NOW, YOU WILL CREATE A CHAIN-REACTION, A TRANS-TEMPORAL SHOCK WAVE THAT WILL RIP ACROSS THE SPACE-TIME CONTINUUM, SHATTERING ALL BEFORE IT!
COULD EVEN YOU SURVIVE THE DESTRUCTION OF TIME ITSELF, BEYONDER?
I...DO NOT KNOW.
IN MY UNIVERSE I AM THE ONE AND THE MANY, THE NOTHING AND THE ALL. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN, AND SHALL ALWAYS BE.
YET, PERHAPS WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE. REED RICHARDS. WITHOUT TIME, THERE CANNOT BE AN ALWAYS. EVEN MEASURED AGAINST IN-FINITY, ONE MOMENT MUST ALWAYS PRECEED THE NEXT.
THUS, IT MAY BE THAT EVEN I AM TIME'S CAPTIVE. THUS, EVEN I MUST SURRENDER TO THIS POWER OF HISTORY OF WHICH YOU SPEAK.
BUT...

THERE YET REMAINS ONE THING THAT I CAN DO WITH THIS PRESUMPTUOUS MORTAL.
IF I AM A PRISONER, THEN LET IT BE BY MY OWN HAND THAT THE KEY IS TURNED. I WILL EXPERIENCE THAT SATISFACTION, AT LEAST.
THUS, LET DOOM'S TRUE BODY BE RECREATED, CAST IN THE SHAPE IT WORE ON MY WORLD
LET THE MIND OF VICTOR VON DOOM RE-ENTER HIS BODY, AS THE STRANGER'S MIND IS RETURNED TO HIS.
AND LET DOOM GO NOW, TRANSPORTED FROM THIS MOMENT IN TIME...
...TO JOIN HIS FELLOW HUMANS IN THAT CONFLICT YOU HAVE DUBBED "THE SECRET WARS."
BUT LET HIM GO WITHOUT THOUGHT OR MEMORY OF WHAT HAS HERE TRANSPIRED, WITH NO MORE KNOWLEDGE OF ME THAN IS POSSESSED BY ANY OTHERS GATHERED AT THAT TIME.
NORM? Oh, BABY, IS IT YOU? IS IT YOU?
P...PEG ...? WHAT ...HAPPENED ...?
THUS IS THE CIRCLE CLOSED. THUS IS HISTORY SATISFIED!

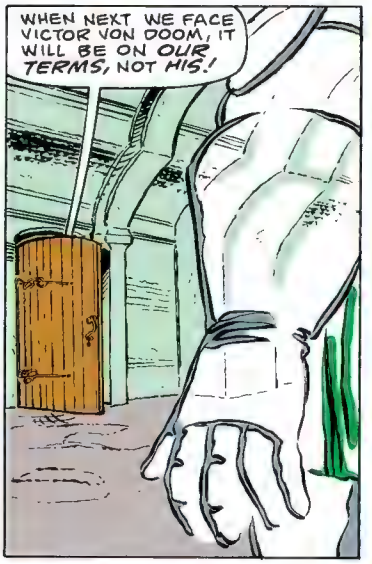



HE... HE'S GONE!
YES... NOW, QUICKLY, ALL OF YOU! I'LL DEACTIVATE YOUR CAGES. WE MUST GET CLEAR OF THIS AREA BEFORE THE LOOP IS CLOSED, AND DOOM RE-APPEARS!

"RE-APPEARS?" BUT... HE'S GONE INTO THE PAST... HASN'T HE?
YES... BUT THERE HE WILL BEGIN A CYCLE THAT WILL END WITH THE BEYONDER BANISHING HIM "ACROSS TIME AND SPACE," AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST "SECRET WARS."

Oh, REED! YOU DON'T MEAN...??
YES, DARLING. THE BEYONDER MAY WELL HAVE CREATED A SELF-PERPETUATING CIRCLE IN TIME! AND NOW THAT DOOM HAS VANISHED OUT OF THE PRESENT, TRAVELING INTO THE PAST...

...THE "BANISHED" DOOM MAY WELL APPEAR HERE, NOW, TO FILL THE "SPACE THUS CREATED.
IN FACT, IT MAY ALREADY BE HAPPENING...
...AND I WILL NOT JEOPARDIZE THESE INNOCENT CIVILIANS IF DOOM ATTACKS US.



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NEXT ISSUE:

GUEST STARS GALORE AND SURPRISES BY THE SCORE IN

RIP WIDE THE SKY

... IN 30 DAYS FROM NOW!

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
MARVEL
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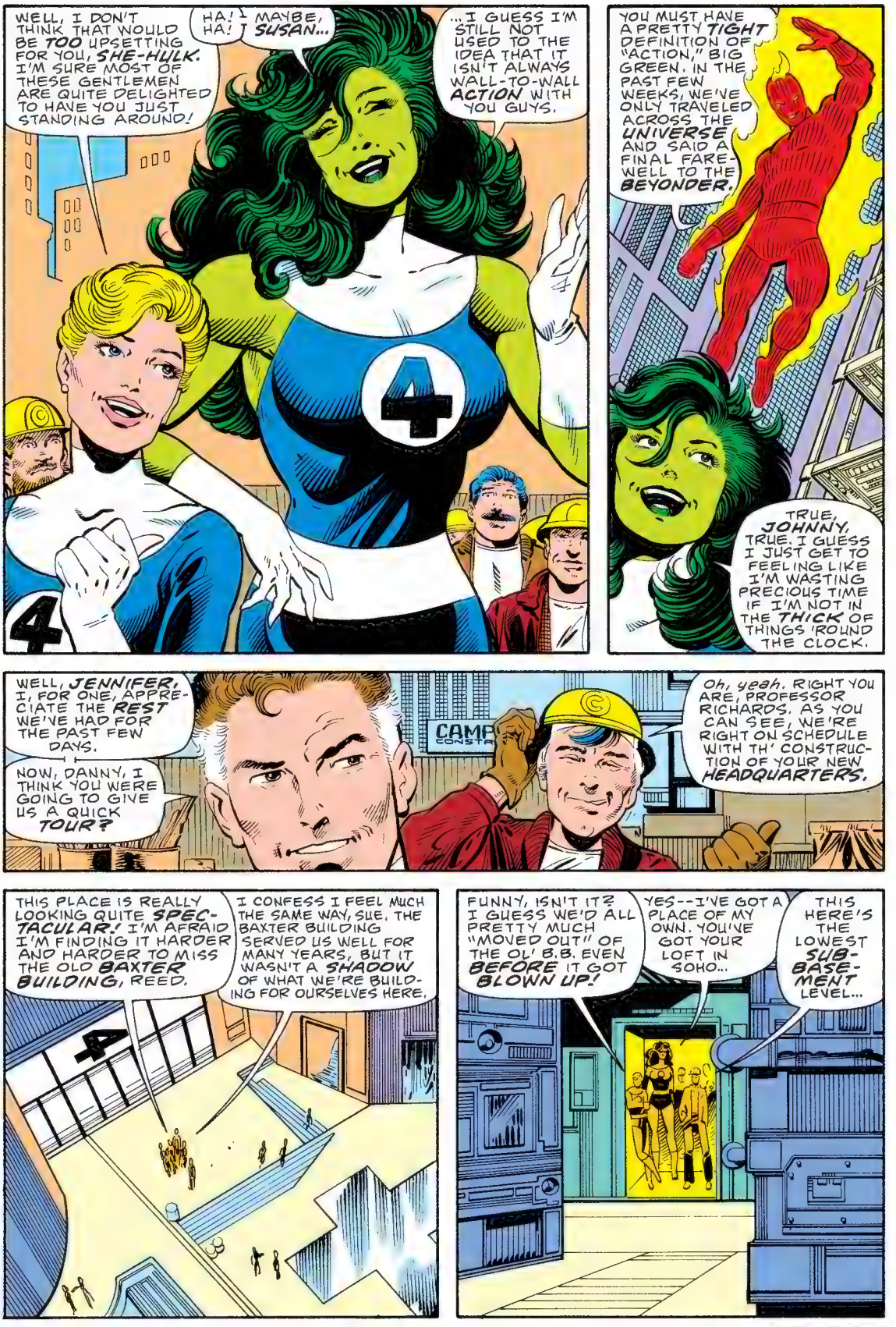
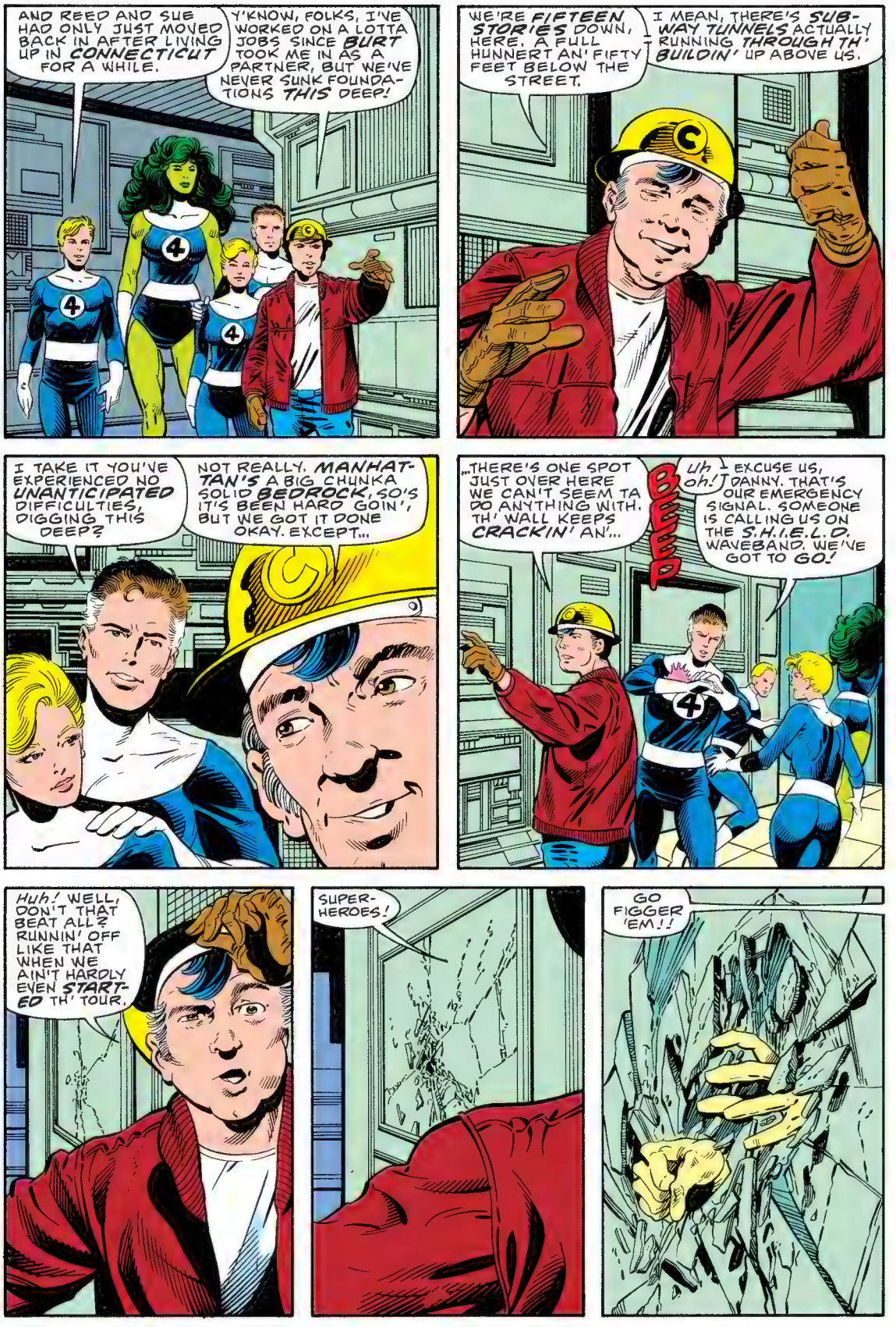
Fantastic Four
IT CAN'T BE...
...NOT YOU?!

STAN LEE PRESENTS A BYRNE-GORDON-WORKMAN-OLIVER-CARLIN-SHOOTER PRODUCTION
RIP WIDE THE SKY!
"Quid nunc caelum roat?"
(What if the sky were to fall?)
TERENCE c.190-159 B.C.
"HEROTORS TIMOROUM ENOS"
HALLPP!!

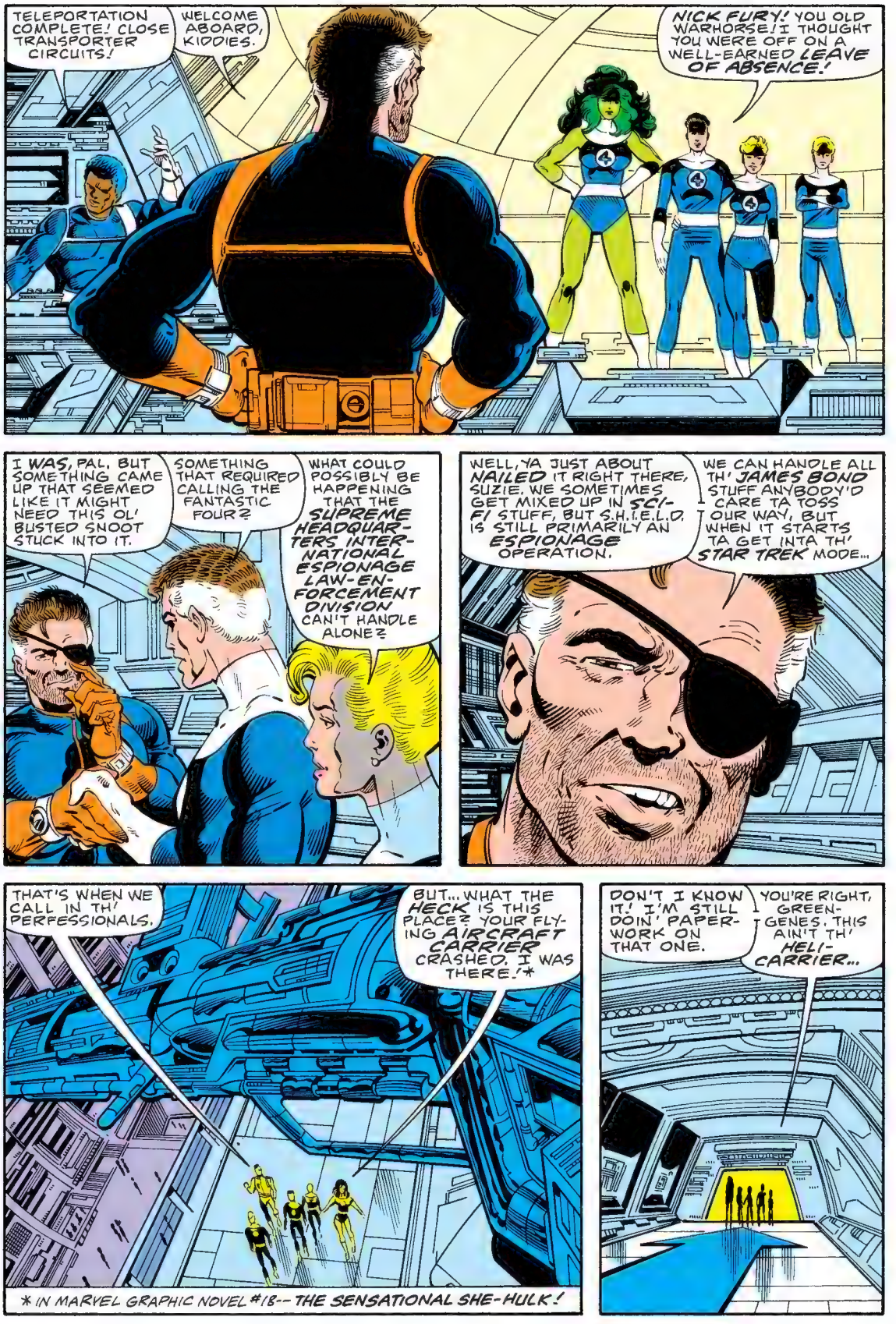
THAT WORKER! HE'S FALLING!
NO NEED TO WORRY, MR. CAMPBELL, WE'LL HAVE THE SITUATION WELL IN HAND!
ACTION STATIONS, EVERYONE!
yeah! FLAME ON!
DON'T DISTRESS YOURSELF, SON. I'VE GOT YOU.
HOLY...!? MISTER FANTASTIC!!
REED'S CAUGHT HIM! AND MY INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD WILL STOP THE GIRDERS AND WHAT-NOT THAT FELL WITH HIM!
WHILE MY FLAME POWER CAN MAKE A QUICK WELD ON THE WEAK SPOTS...
...AND PREVENT ANYTHING ELSE FROM FALLING!
LOOKIT! IT'S TH' HUMAN TORCH!
GOOD WORK, TEAM. NO LIVES LOST, AND NO DAMAGE DONE!
EXCEPT TO MY EGO!
ALL I GOT TO DO WAS STAND AROUND AND WATCH!


WELL, I DON'T THINK THAT WOULD BE TOO UPSETTING FOR YOU, SHE-HULK. I'M SURE MOST OF THESE GENTLEMEN ARE QUITE DELIGHTED TO HAVE YOU JUST STANDING AROUND!
HA! HA!
MAYBE, SUSAN...
...I GUESS I'M STILL NOT USED TO THE IDEA THAT IT ISN'T ALWAYS WALL-TO-WALL ACTION WITH YOU GUYS.
YOU MUST HAVE A PRETTY TIGHT DEFINITION OF "ACTION," BIG GREEN. IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, WE'VE ONLY TRAVELED ACROSS THE UNIVERSE AND SAID A FINAL FARE-WELL TO THE BEYONDER.
TRUE, JOHNNY, TRUE. I GUESS I JUST GET TO FEELING LIKE I'M WASTING PRECIOUS TIME IF I'M NOT IN THE THICK OF THINGS 'ROUND THE CLOCK.
WELL, JENNIFER, I, FOR ONE, APPRE-CIATE THE REST WE'VE HAD FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS.
NOW, DANNY, I THINK YOU WERE GOING TO GIVE US A QUICK TOUR?
CAMP CONSTR
Oh, yeah. RIGHT YOU ARE, PROFESSOR RICHARDS. AS YOU CAN SEE, WE'RE RIGHT ON SCHEDULE WITH TH' CONSTRUC-TION OF YOUR NEW HEADQUARTERS.
THIS PLACE IS REALLY LOOKING QUITE SPEC-TACULAR! I'M AFRAID I'M FINDING IT HARDER AND HARDER TO MISS THE OLD BAXTER BUILDING, REED.
I CONFESS I FEEL MUCH THE SAME WAY, SUE. THE BAXTER BUILDING SERVED US WELL FOR MANY YEARS, BUT IT WASN'T A SHADOW OF WHAT WE'RE BUILD-ING FOR OURSELVES HERE.
FUNNY, ISN'T IT? I GUESS WE'D ALL PRETTY MUCH "MOVED OUT" OF THE OL' B.B. EVEN BEFORE IT GOT BLOWN UP!
YES--I'VE GOT A PLACE OF MY OWN. YOU'VE GOT YOUR LOFT IN SOHO...
THIS HERE'S THE LOWEST SUB-BASE-MENT LEVEL...

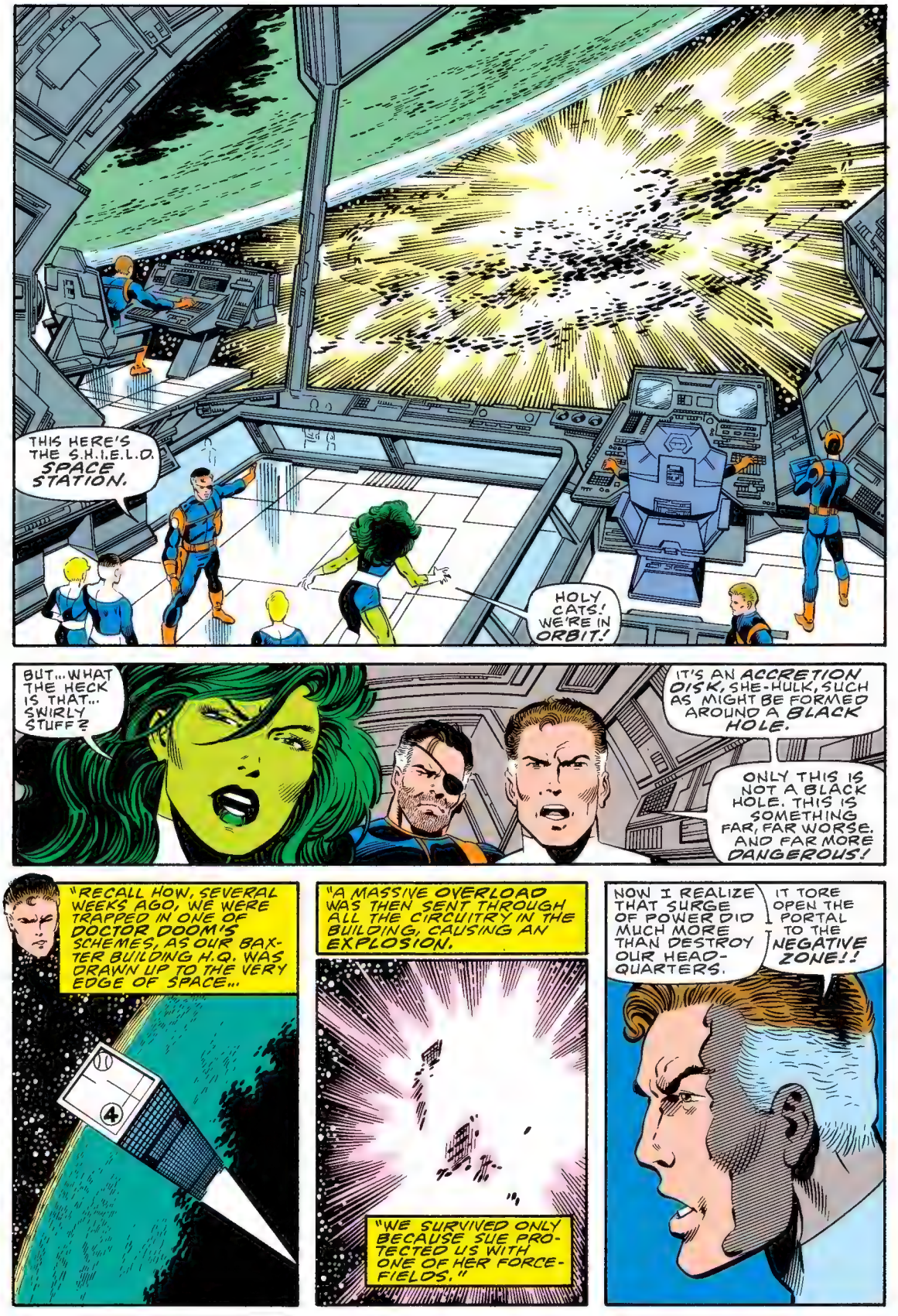

AND REED AND SUE HAD ONLY JUST MOVED BACK IN AFTER LIVING UP IN CONNECTICUT FOR A WHILE.
Y'KNOW, FOLKS, I'VE WORKED ON A LOTTA JOBS SINCE BURT TOOK ME IN AS A PARTNER, BUT WE'VE NEVER SUNK FOUNDATIONS THIS DEEP!
WE'RE FIFTEEN STORIES DOWN, HERE. A FULL HUNNERT AN' FIFTY FEET BELOW THE STREET.
I MEAN, THERE'S SUBWAY TUNNELS ACTUALLY RUNNING THROUGH TH' BUILDIN' UP ABOVE US.
I TAKE IT YOU'VE EXPERIENCED NO UNANTICIPATED DIFFICULTIES, DIGGING THIS DEEP?
NOT REALLY. MANHATTAN'S A BIG CHUNKA SOLID BEDROCK, SO'S IT'S BEEN HARD GOIN', BUT WE GOT IT DONE OKAY. EXCEPT...
...THERE'S ONE SPOT JUST OVER HERE WE CAN'T SEEM TA DO ANYTHING WITH. TH' WALL KEEPS CRACKIN' AN'...
BEEP
Uh oh!
EXCUSE US, DANNY. THAT'S OUR EMERGENCY SIGNAL. SOMEONE IS CALLING US ON THE S.H.I.E.L.D. WAVEBAND. WE'VE GOT TO GO!
Huh! WELL, DON'T THAT BEAT ALL? RUNNIN' OFF LIKE THAT WHEN WE AIN'T HARDLY EVEN STARTED TH' TOUR.
SUPER-HEROES!
GO FIGGER 'EM!!

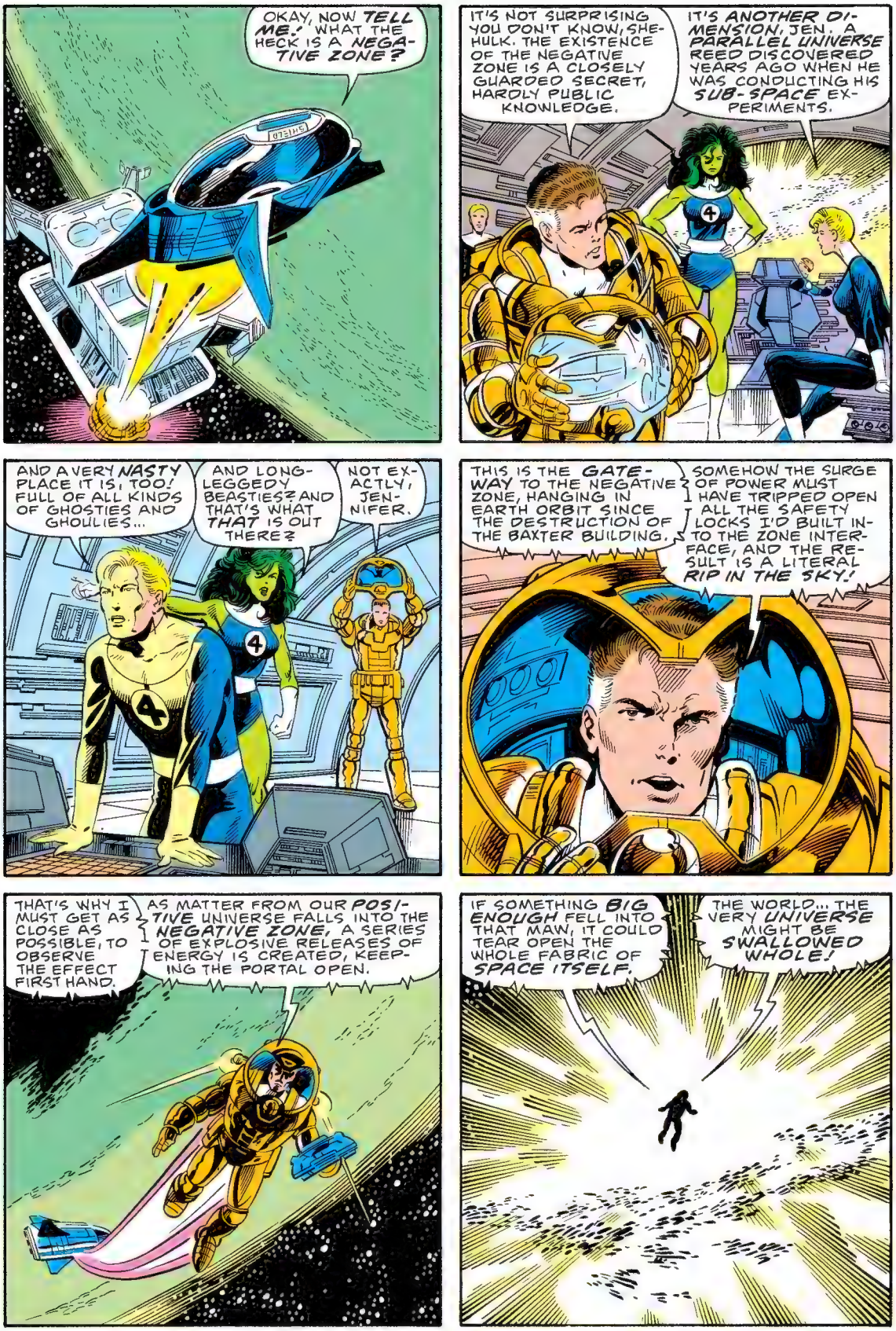
Huh? WASSAT NOISE...?
oh... MY... GOSH...
NO!
Ha ha ha ha!
FREE! FREE, AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS TRAPPED BENEATH THE EARTH, THE BASILISK IS FREE!!
BUT... WHAT PLACE IS THIS? I SENSED THE DISTURBANCE OF THE GROUND CAUSED BY ITS CONSTRUCTION...
...AND USED THE POWER OF MY EYE-BEAMS TO CUT THROUGH THE ROCK AND GET HERE.
BUT THERE'S NOTHING ABOUT THIS PLACE TO IDENTIFY IT...
NO MATTER! IT IS AN ABODE OF MEN, AND MUST, THEREFORE, HAVE ACCESS TO THE SURFACE!
AND ONCE ON THE SURFACE, I SHALL HAVE MY REVENGE AGAINST THE THING AND SPIDER-MAN!!*
* BASIL TANGLED WITH THEM BACK IN MARVEL TEAM-UP #47.

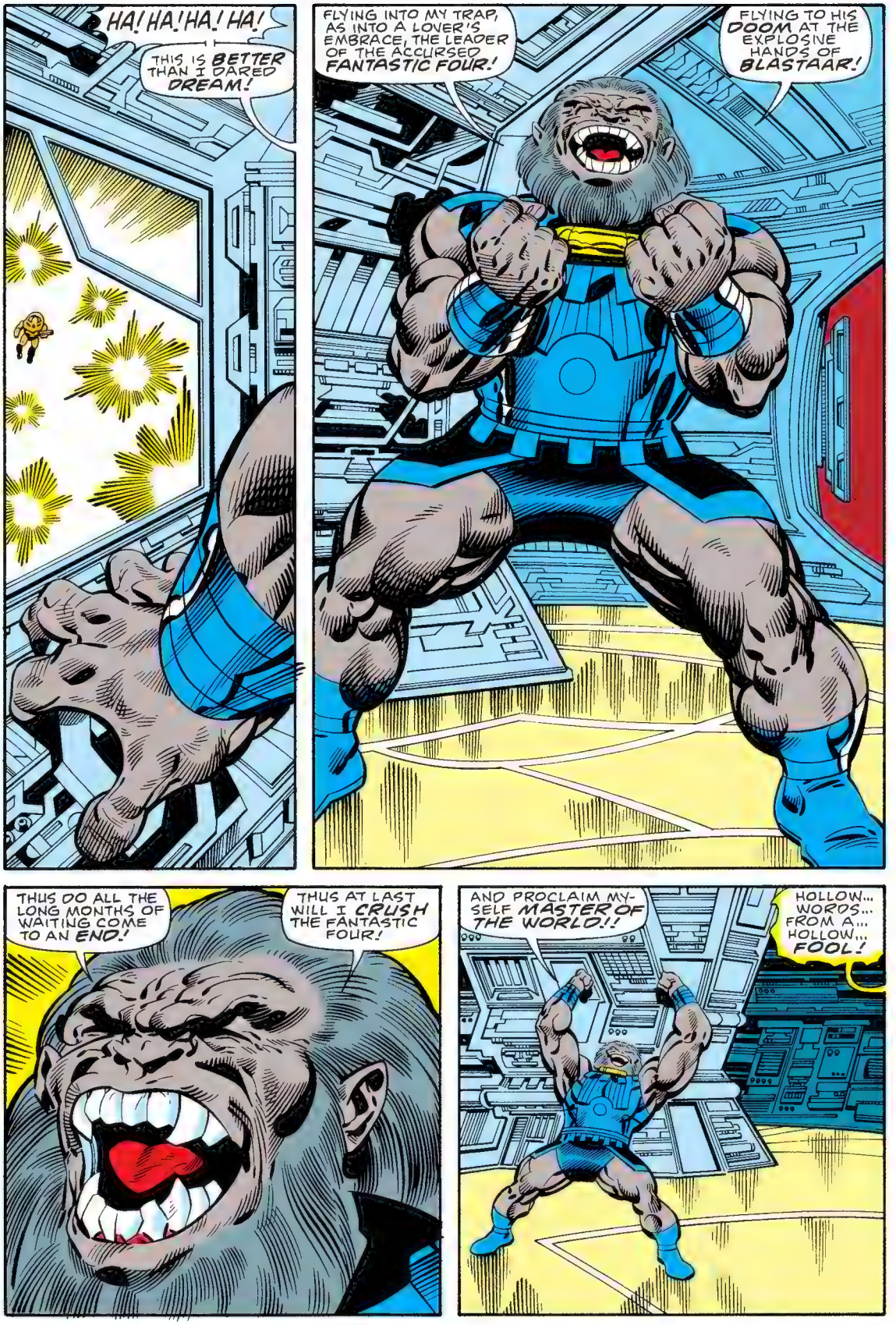
?!
I AM ABOVE THE INTERSECTION OF MADISON AVENUE AND 42nd STREET.
THE EXACT CORNER ON WHICH STANDS THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR! BUT THIS IS NOT...
CLIC!
WHO...?!?
PUM!
JUSTICE IS SERVED! *
*FOR NOW, MAYBE... BUT SEE CURRENT ISSUES OF CAPTAIN AMERICA FOR THE FULL SCOOP ON WHAT YOU JUST WITNESSED!

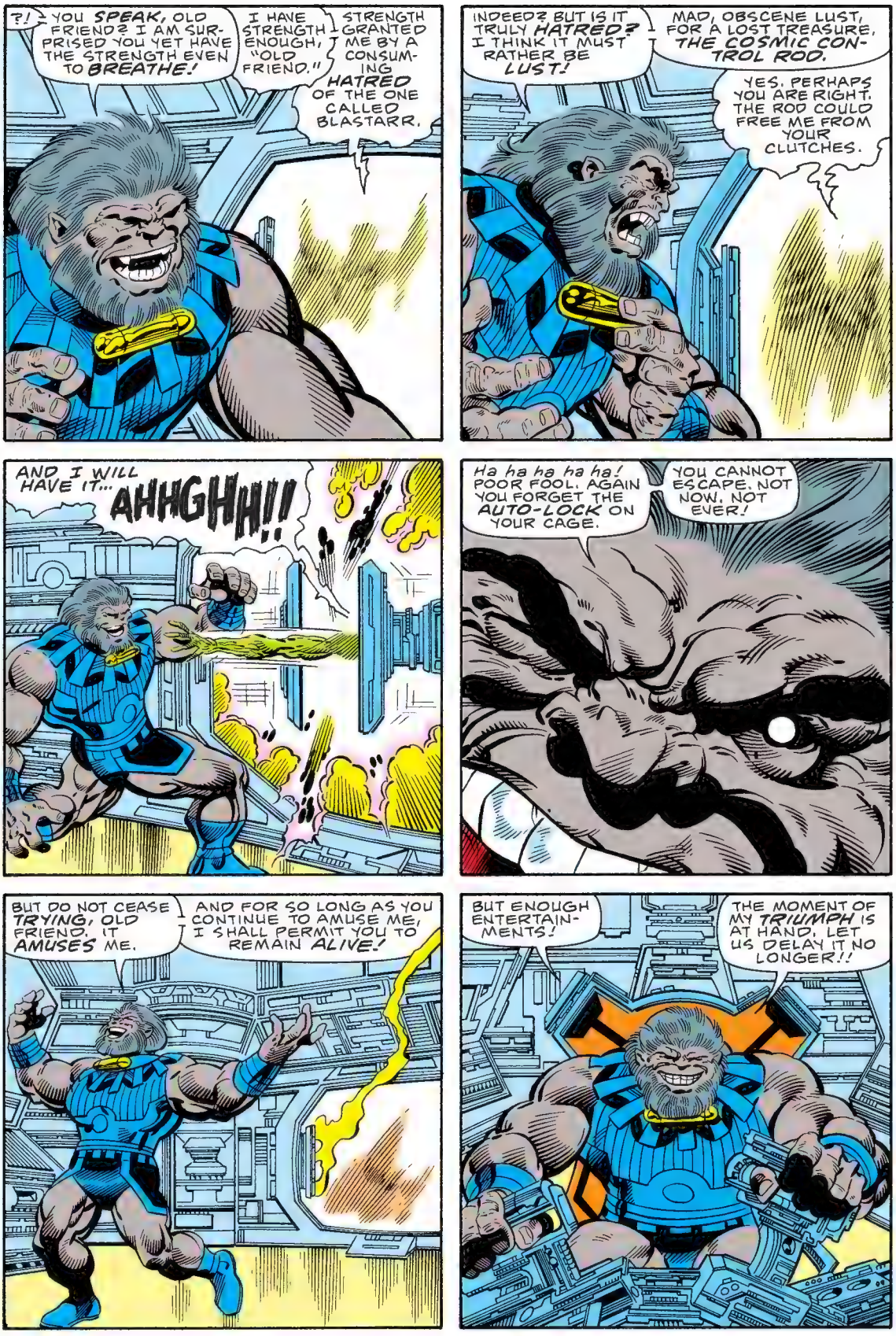

TELEPORTATION COMPLETE! CLOSE TRANSPORTER CIRCUITS!
WELCOME ABOARD, KIDDIES.
NICK FURY! YOU OLD WARHORSE! I THOUGHT YOU WERE OFF ON A WELL-EARNED LEAVE OF ABSENCE!
I WAS, PAL. BUT SOMETHING CAME UP THAT SEEMED LIKE IT MIGHT NEED THIS OL' BUSTED SNOOT STUCK INTO IT.
SOMETHING THAT REQUIRED CALLING THE FANTASTIC FOUR?
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE HAPPENING THAT THE SUPREME HEADQUARTERS INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE LAW-ENFORCEMENT DIVISION CAN'T HANDLE ALONE?
WELL, YA JUST ABOUT NAILED IT RIGHT THERE, SUZIE. WE SOMETIMES GET MIXED UP IN SCI-FI STUFF, BUT S.H.I.E.L.D. IS STILL PRIMARILY AN ESPIONAGE OPERATION.
WE CAN HANDLE ALL TH' JAMES BOND STUFF ANYBODY'D CARE TA TOSS OUR WAY, BUT WHEN IT STARTS TA GET INTA TH' STAR TREK MODE...
THAT'S WHEN WE CALL IN TH' PERFESSIONALS.
BUT... WHAT THE HECK IS THIS PLACE? YOUR FLYING AIRCRAFT CARRIER CRASHED. I WAS THERE.!*
DON'T I KNOW IT. I'M STILL DOIN' PAPERWORK ON THAT ONE.
YOU'RE RIGHT, GREENGENES. THIS AIN'T TH' HELICARRIER...

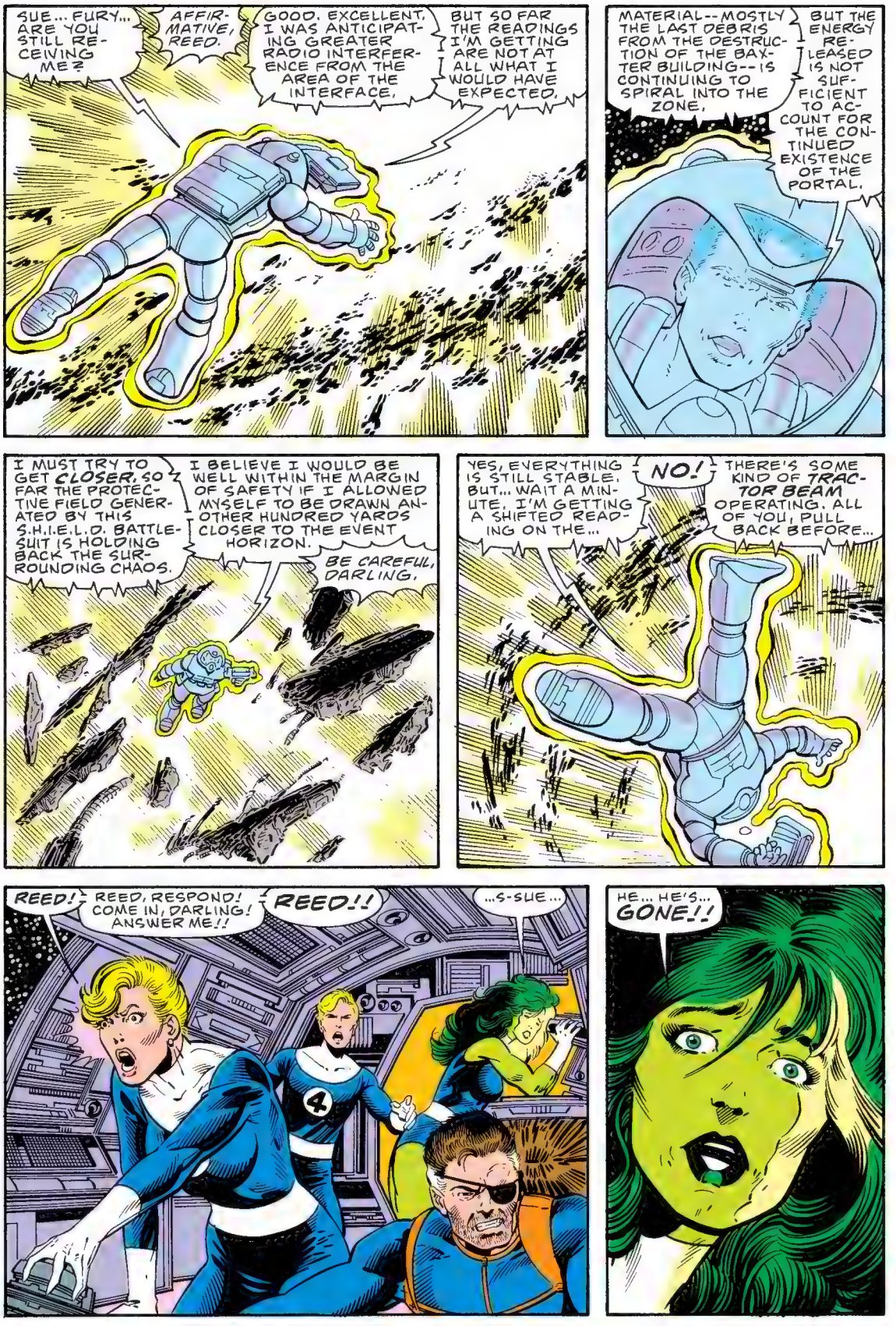
*IN MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL #18-- THE SENSATIONAL SHE-HULK!


THIS HERE'S THE S.H.I.E.L.D. SPACE STATION.
HOLY CATS! WE'RE IN ORBIT!
BUT... WHAT THE HECK IS THAT... SWIRLY STUFF?
IT'S AN ACCRETION DISK, SHE-HULK, SUCH AS MIGHT BE FORMED AROUND A BLACK HOLE.
ONLY THIS IS NOT A BLACK HOLE. THIS IS SOMETHING FAR, FAR WORSE. AND FAR MORE DANGEROUS!
"RECALL HOW, SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, WE WERE TRAPPED IN ONE OF DOCTOR DOOM'S SCHEMES, AS OUR BAXTER BUILDING H.Q. WAS DRAWN UP TO THE VERY EDGE OF SPACE...
"A MASSIVE OVERLOAD WAS THEN SENT THROUGH ALL THE CIRCUITRY IN THE BUILDING, CAUSING AN EXPLOSION.
"WE SURVIVED ONLY BECAUSE SUE PROTECTED US WITH ONE OF HER FORCE-FIELDS."
NOW I REALIZE THAT SURGE OF POWER DID MUCH MORE THAN DESTROY OUR HEADQUARTERS.
IT TORE OPEN THE PORTAL TO THE NEGATIVE ZONE!!

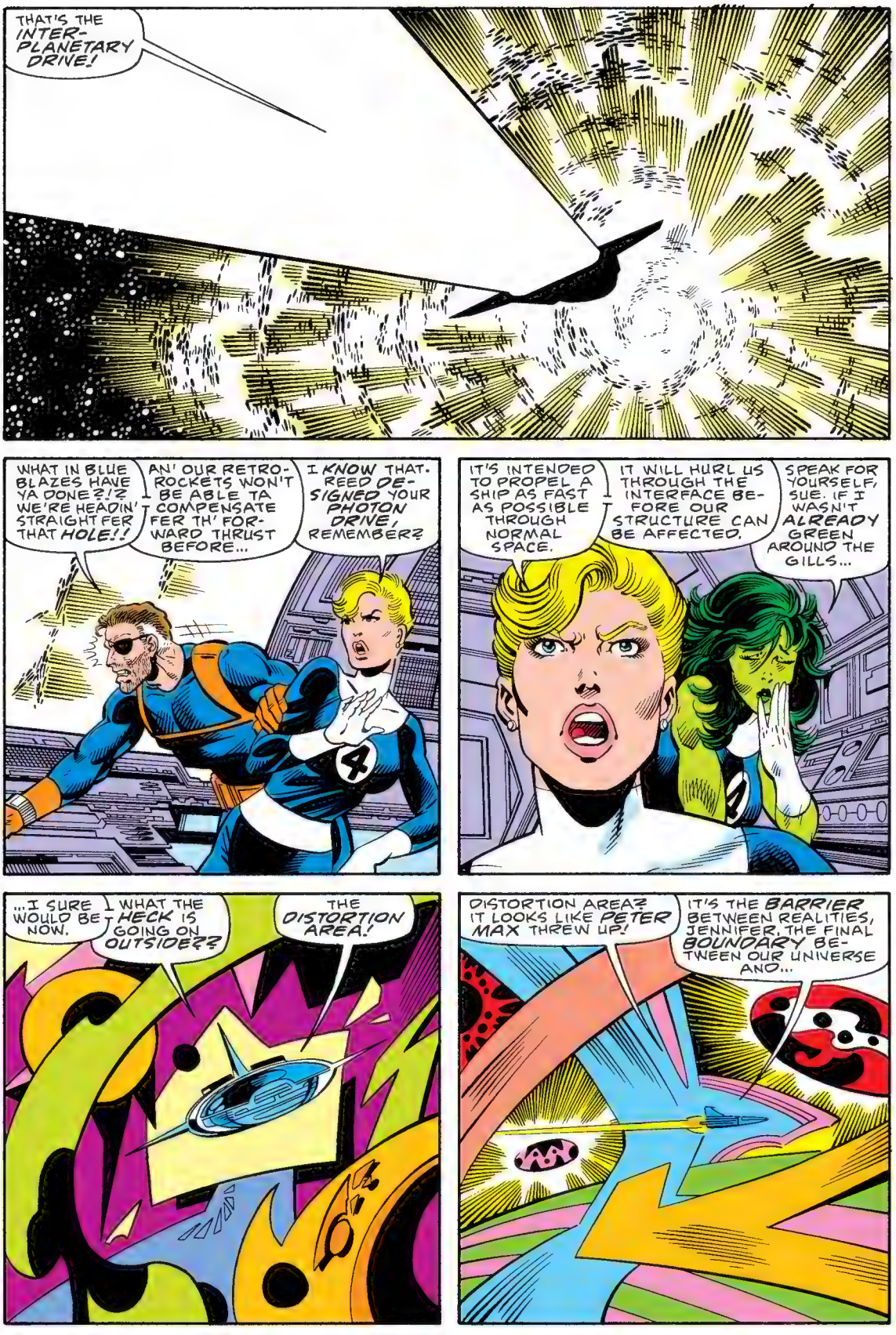

OKAY, NOW TELL ME! WHAT THE HECK IS A NEGATIVE ZONE?
IT'S NOT SURPRISING YOU DON'T KNOW, SHE-HULK. THE EXISTENCE OF THE NEGATIVE ZONE IS A CLOSELY GUARDED SECRET, HARDLY PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE.
IT'S ANOTHER DIMENSION, JEN. A PARALLEL UNIVERSE REED DISCOVERED YEARS AGO WHEN HE WAS CONDUCTING HIS SUB-SPACE EXPERIMENTS.
AND A VERY NASTY PLACE IT IS, TOO! FULL OF ALL KINDS OF GHOSTIES AND GHOULIES...
AND LONG-LEGGEDY BEASTIES? AND THAT'S WHAT THAT IS OUT THERE?
NOT EXACTLY, JENNIFER.
THIS IS THE GATEWAY TO THE NEGATIVE ZONE, HANGING IN EARTH ORBIT SINCE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BAXTER BUILDING.
SOMEHOW THE SURGE OF POWER MUST HAVE TRIPPED OPEN ALL THE SAFETY LOCKS I'D BUILT INTO THE ZONE INTERFACE, AND THE RESULT IS A LITERAL RIP IN THE SKY!
THAT'S WHY I MUST GET AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE, TO OBSERVE THE EFFECT FIRST HAND.
AS MATTER FROM OUR POSITIVE UNIVERSE FALLS INTO THE NEGATIVE ZONE, A SERIES OF EXPLOSIVE RELEASES OF ENERGY IS CREATED, KEEPING THE PORTAL OPEN.
IF SOMETHING BIG ENOUGH FELL INTO THAT MAW, IT COULD TEAR OPEN THE WHOLE FABRIC OF SPACE ITSELF.
THE WORLD... THE VERY UNIVERSE MIGHT BE SWALLOWED WHOLE!

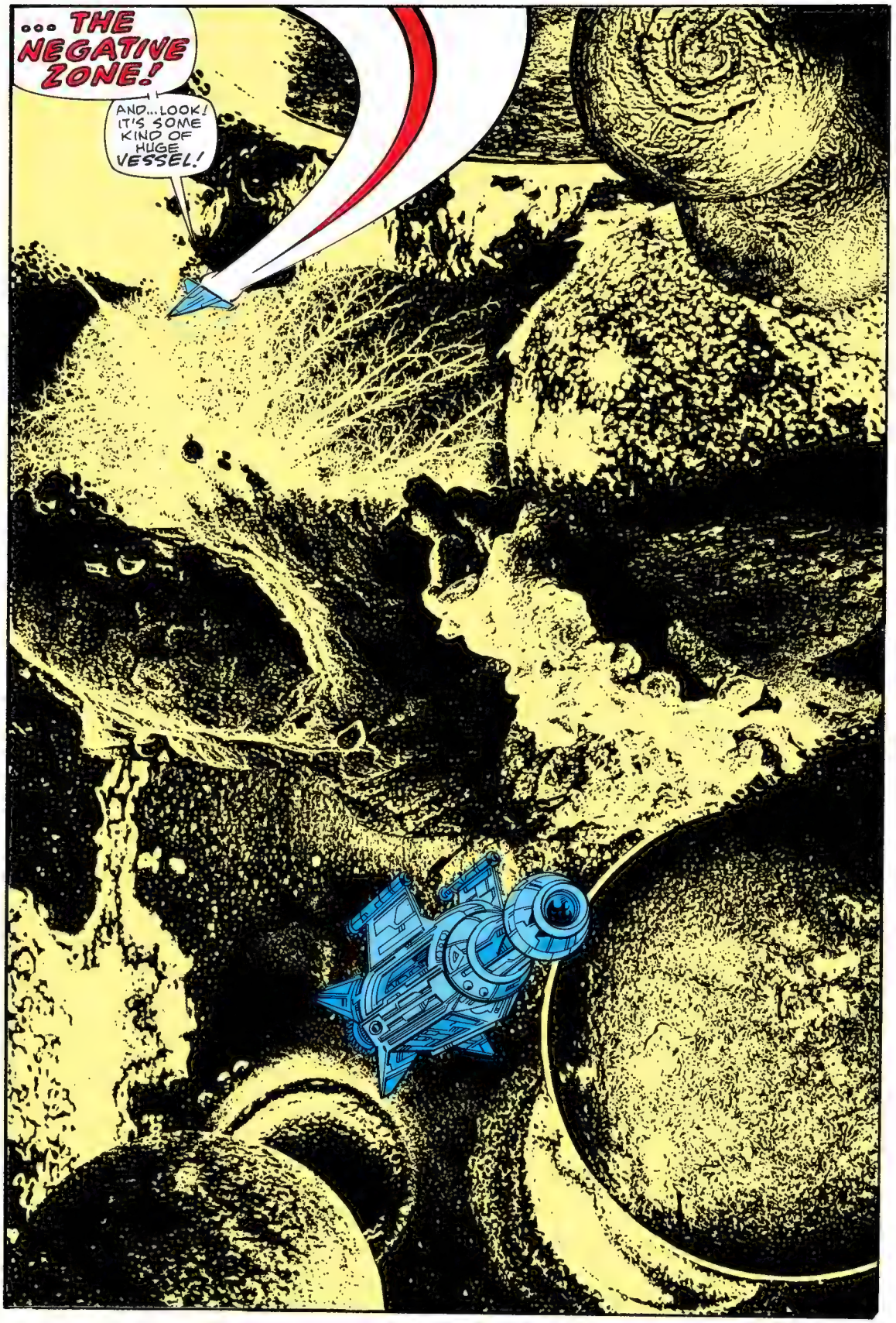

HA! HA! HA! HA!
THIS IS BETTER THAN I DARED DREAM!
FLYING INTO MY TRAP, AS INTO A LOVER'S EMBRACE, THE LEADER OF THE ACCURSED FANTASTIC FOUR!
FLYING TO HIS DOOM AT THE EXPLOSIVE HANDS OF BLASTAAR!
THUS DO ALL THE LONG MONTHS OF WAITING COME TO AN END!
THUS AT LAST WILL I CRUSH THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
AND PROCLAIM MYSELF MASTER OF THE WORLD!!
HOLLOW... WORDS... FROM A... HOLLOW... FOOL!


?! YOU SPEAK, OLD FRIEND? I AM SURPRISED YOU YET HAVE THE STRENGTH EVEN TO BREATHE!
I HAVE STRENGTH ENOUGH, "OLD FRIEND."
STRENGTH GRANTED ME BY A CONSUMING HATRED OF THE ONE CALLED BLASTARR.
INDEED? BUT IS IT TRULY HATRED? I THINK IT MUST RATHER BE LUST!
MAD, OBSCENE LUST, FOR A LOST TREASURE, THE COSMIC CONTROL ROD.
YES. PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT. THE ROD COULD FREE ME FROM YOUR CLUTCHES.
AND I WILL HAVE IT... AHHGHH!!
Ha ha ha ha ha! POOR FOOL. AGAIN YOU FORGET THE AUTO-LOCK ON YOUR CAGE.
YOU CANNOT ESCAPE. NOT NOW, NOT EVER!
BUT DO NOT CEASE TRYING, OLD FRIEND. IT AMUSES ME.
AND FOR SO LONG AS YOU CONTINUE TO AMUSE ME, I SHALL PERMIT YOU TO REMAIN ALIVE!
BUT ENOUGH ENTERTAINMENTS!
THE MOMENT OF MY TRIUMPH IS AT HAND. LET US DELAY IT NO LONGER!!

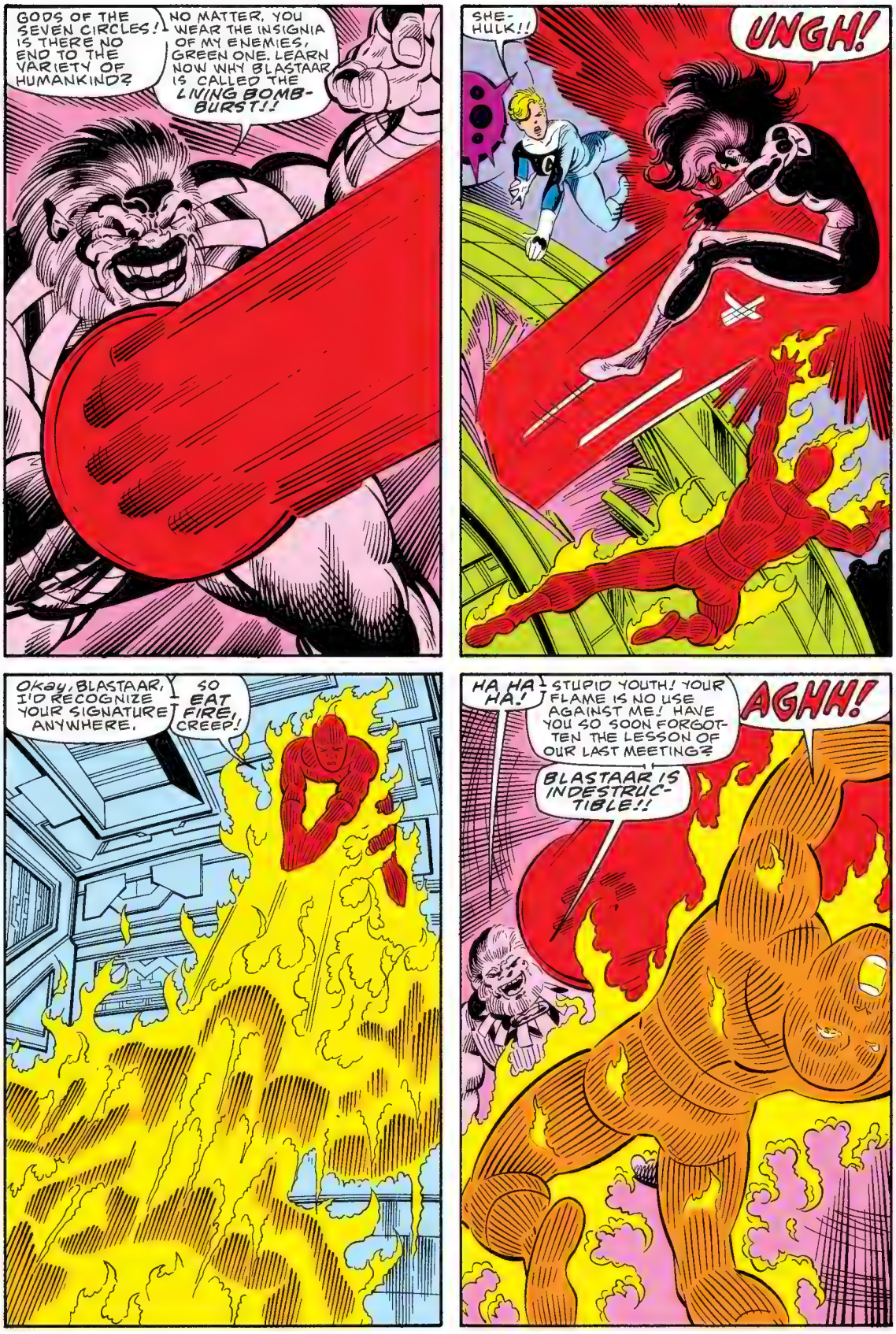

SUE... FURY... ARE YOU STILL RECEIVING ME?
AFFIRMATIVE, REED.
GOOD. EXCELLENT. I WAS ANTICIPATING GREATER RADIO INTERFERENCE FROM THE AREA OF THE INTERFACE.
BUT SO FAR THE READINGS I'M GETTING ARE NOT AT ALL WHAT I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED.
MATERIAL--MOSTLY THE LAST DEBRIS FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BAXTER BUILDING--IS CONTINUING TO SPIRAL INTO THE ZONE.
BUT THE ENERGY RELEASED IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO ACCOUNT FOR THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE PORTAL.
I MUST TRY TO GET *CLOSER*, SO FAR THE PROTECTIVE FIELD GENERATED BY THIS S.H.I.E.L.D. BATTLESUIT IS HOLDING BACK THE SURROUNDING CHAOS.
I BELIEVE I WOULD BE WELL WITHIN THE MARGIN OF SAFETY IF I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE DRAWN ANOTHER HUNDRED YARDS CLOSER TO THE EVENT HORIZON.
BE CAREFUL, DARLING.
YES, EVERYTHING IS STILL STABLE. BUT... WAIT A MINUTE. I'M GETTING A SHIFTED READING ON THE...
NO!
THERE'S SOME KIND OF *TRACTOR BEAM* OPERATING. ALL OF YOU, PULL BACK BEFORE...
REED!
REED, RESPOND! COME IN, DARLING! ANSWER ME!!
REED!!
...S-SUE...
HE... HE'S... *GONE!!*

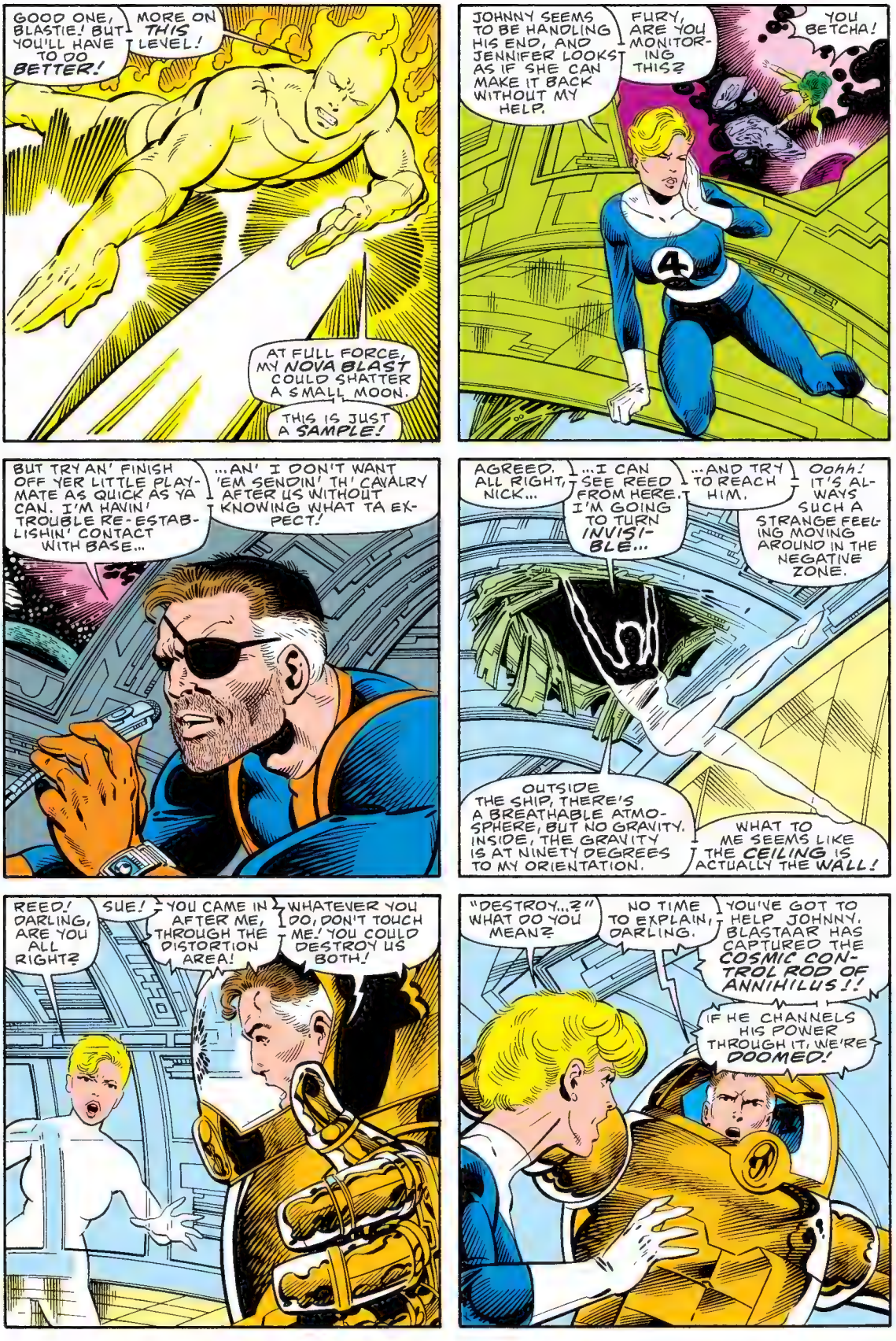
G-GONE...
YOU MEAN... HE'S BEEN... DESTROYED...
I...I GUESS SO. HE'S GONE FROM THIS SCANNER.
HE... HE MUST'VE FALLEN INTO THE ZONE!
YOU DIDN'T SEE HIM EXPLODE?
THEN...THERE'S A CHANCE HE'S STILL ALIVE! WE'VE GOT TO GO AFTER HIM!
"...AFTER...?"
NOW HOLD TH' PHONE, SUZIE. I AIN'T NO SCIENTIST, BUT I UNDERSTOOD ENOUGH O' WHAT YER HUBBY SAID TO PUT TH' KIBOSH ON THAT LITTLE NOTION.
NICHOLAS! HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? YOU AND REED HAVE BEEN FRIENDS FOR YEARS!
HOW CAN YOU DESERT HIM AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
I AIN'T DESERTING HIM, SUZIE. YA GOTTA BELIEVE THAT. BUT YA ALSO GOTTA LOOK AT TH' WHOLE PICTURE.
REMEMBER WHAT HE SAID ABOUT THE RISKS IF A BIG OBJECT FELL INTA THAT HOLE?
NICK'S RIGHT, SIS. REED SAID THE WHOLE WORLD MIGHT BE IN DANGER OF BEING DESTROYED.
HE'D WANT US TO CONSIDER THAT, TOO!
DON'T YOU TALK TO ME ABOUT THE WORLD, JOHNNY STORM! REED HAS LAID HIS LIFE ON THE LINE FOR THE EARTH MORE TIMES THAN YOU CAN COUNT!
THE WORLD OWES HIM MORE THAN CAN EVER BE REPAID.
AND... WITHOUT REED...
I HAVE NO WORLD!
SHE!
NO!
PHOTON BEAM DRIVE
WEAPON
EMERGENCY


THAT'S THE INTER-PLANETARY DRIVE!
WHAT IN BLUE BLAZES HAVE YA DONE?!? WE'RE HEADIN' STRAIGHT FER THAT HOLE!!
AN' OUR RETRO-ROCKETS WON'T BE ABLE TA COMPENSATE FER TH' FORWARD THRUST BEFORE...
I KNOW THAT. REED DESIGNED YOUR PHOTON DRIVE, REMEMBER?
IT'S INTENDED TO PROPEL A SHIP AS FAST AS POSSIBLE THROUGH NORMAL SPACE.
IT WILL HURL US THROUGH THE INTERFACE BEFORE OUR STRUCTURE CAN BE AFFECTED.
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, SUE. IF I WASN'T ALREADY GREEN AROUND THE GILLS...
...I SURE WOULD BE NOW.
WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON OUTSIDE??
THE DISTORTION AREA!
DISTORTION AREA? IT LOOKS LIKE PETER MAX THREW UP!
IT'S THE BARRIER BETWEEN REALITIES, JENNIFER. THE FINAL BOUNDARY BETWEEN OUR UNIVERSE AND...

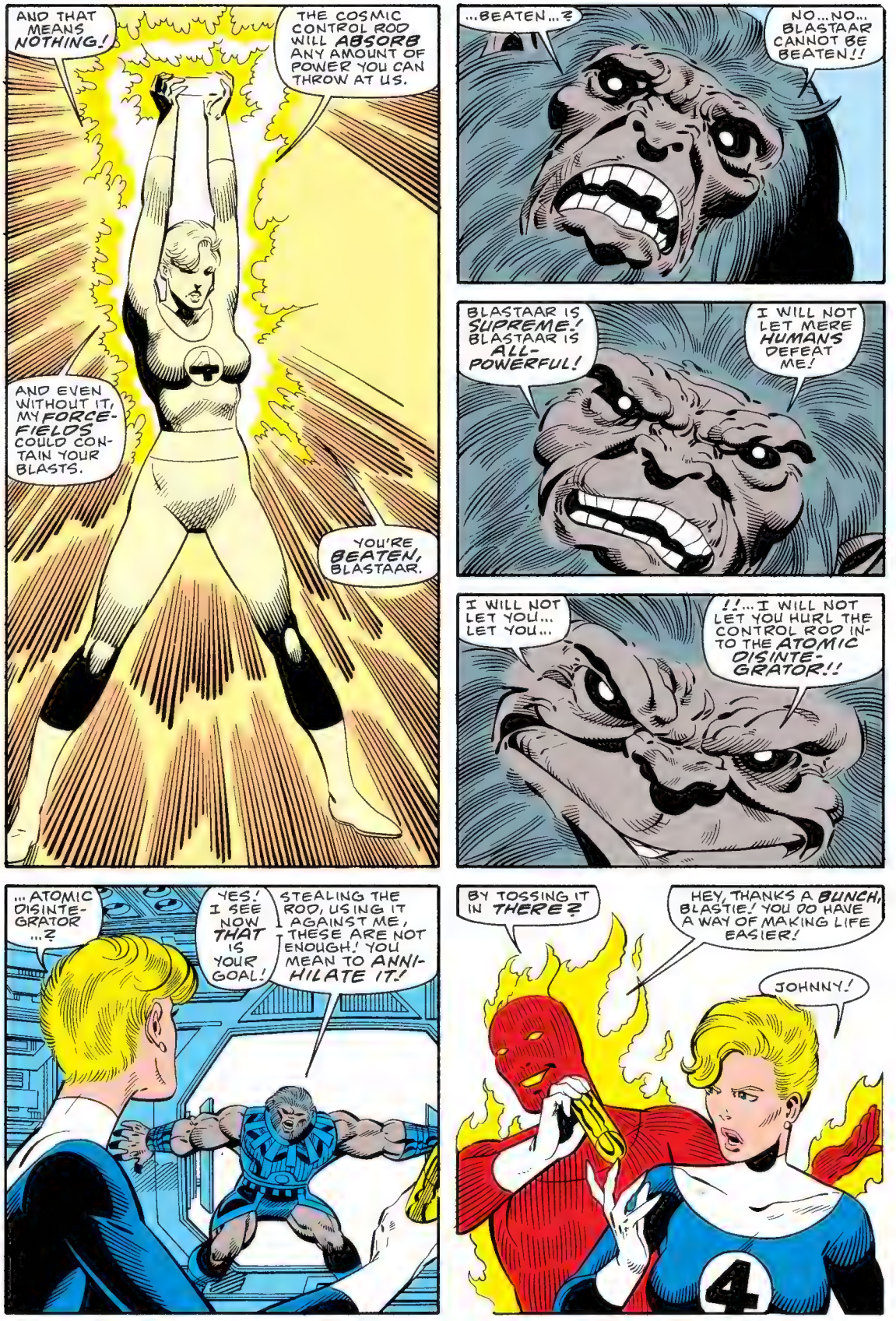

... THE NEGATIVE ZONE!
AND...LOOK! IT'S SOME KIND OF HUGE VESSEL!

HA HA HA HA! HOW SWEET SHALL BE THE VENGEANCE OF BLASTAAR! HOW UTTERLY FINAL SHALL BE THE DEFEAT OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
I WOULDN'T COUNT US OUT TOO QUICKLY IF I WERE YOU, BLASTAAR.
BUT YOU ARE NOT ME, REED RICHARDS! YOU HAVE NOT A FRACTION OF BLASTAAR'S AWESOME POWER!
PERHAPS NOT.
BUT I DO HAVE CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE THAT SEEMS BEYOND YOU.
SUCH AS THE FACT THAT A BODY SURROUNDED BY A FORCE-FIELD DOES NOT UNDERGO THE ATOMIC CHANGE USUALLY CAUSED BY PASSAGE THROUGH THE DISTORTION AREA.
WHAT FOOLISHNESS IS THIS? WOULD YOU HAVE ME BELIEVE YOU ARE STILL MATTER, EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE HERE IN MY ANTI-MATTER UNIVERSE?
I MUST TEST...
AHH!!
IZKT!
CAREFUL, YOU FOOL! IF MY BODY COMES INTO CONTACT WITH A SUFFICIENT AMOUNT OF ANTI-MATTER, THE RESULTANT EXPLOSION WILL ANNIHILATE EVERYTHING FOR THOUSANDS OF MILES AROUND US!
CURSE YOU! THIS IS A CONTINGENCY I HAD NOT CONSIDERED. I MUST FIND A WAY TO...
WHAT...?!?
HELLO, HELLO, WHOEVER YOU ARE! COMPANY'S COMING!

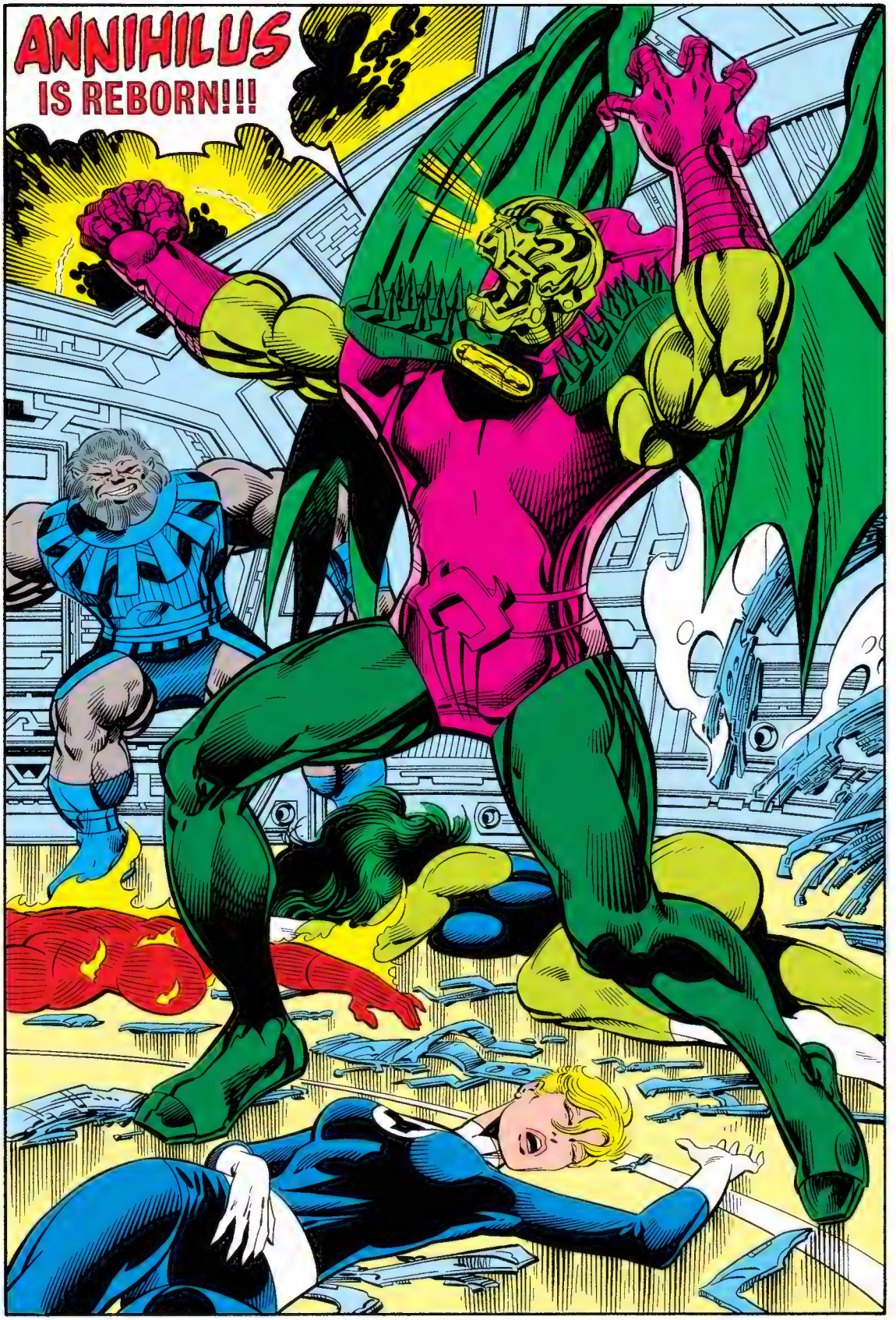

GODS OF THE SEVEN CIRCLES! IS THERE NO END TO THE VARIETY OF HUMANKIND?
NO MATTER. YOU WEAR THE INSIGNIA OF MY ENEMIES, GREEN ONE. LEARN NOW WHY BLASTAAR IS CALLED THE LIVING BOMB-BURST!!
SHE-HULK!!
UNGH!
OKAY, BLASTAAR, I'D RECOGNIZE YOUR SIGNATURE ANYWHERE.
SO EAT FIRE, CREEP!
HA HA HA!
STUPID YOUTH! YOUR FLAME IS NO USE AGAINST ME! HAVE YOU SO SOON FORGOTTEN THE LESSON OF OUR LAST MEETING?
BLASTAAR IS INDESTRUCTIBLE!!
AGHH!

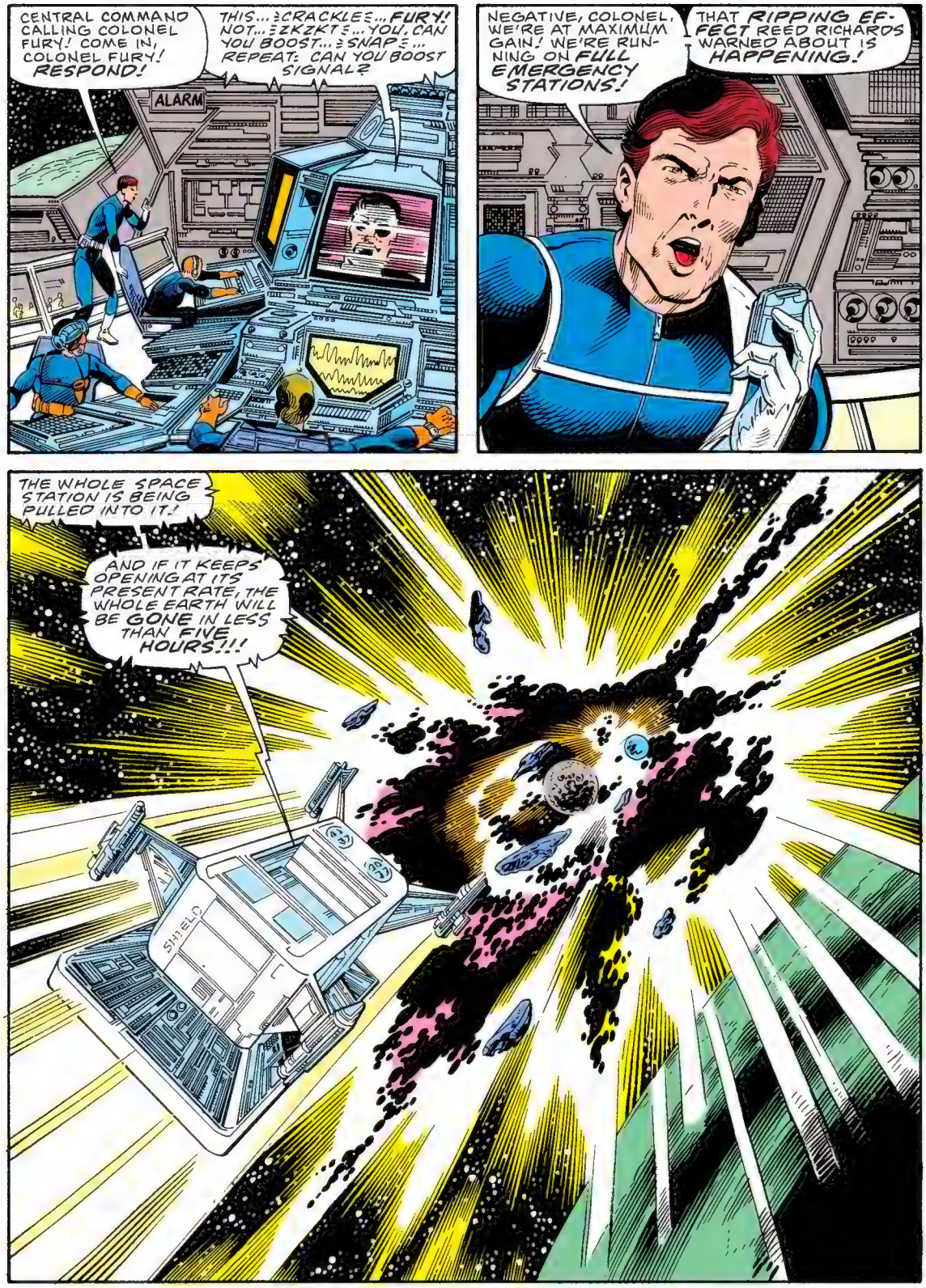

GOOD ONE, BLASTIE! BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER!
MORE ON THIS LEVEL!
AT FULL FORCE, MY NOVA BLAST COULD SHATTER A SMALL MOON.
THIS IS JUST A SAMPLE!
JOHNNY SEEMS TO BE HANDLING HIS END, AND JENNIFER LOOKS AS IF SHE CAN MAKE IT BACK WITHOUT MY HELP.
FURY, ARE YOU MONITORING THIS?
YOU BETCHA!
BUT TRY AN' FINISH OFF YER LITTLE PLAYMATE AS QUICK AS YA CAN. I'M HAVIN' TROUBLE RE-ESTABLISHIN' CONTACT WITH BASE...
...AN' I DON'T WANT 'EM SENDIN' TH' CAVALRY AFTER US WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT TA EXPECT!
AGREED. ALL RIGHT, NICK...
...I CAN SEE REED FROM HERE. I'M GOING TO TURN INVISIBLE...
...AND TRY TO REACH HIM.
Oohh! IT'S ALWAYS SUCH A STRANGE FEELING MOVING AROUND IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE.
OUTSIDE THE SHIP, THERE'S A BREATHABLE ATMOSPHERE, BUT NO GRAVITY. INSIDE, THE GRAVITY IS AT NINETY DEGREES TO MY ORIENTATION.
WHAT TO ME SEEMS LIKE THE CEILING IS ACTUALLY THE WALL!
REED! DARLING, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
SUE! YOU CAME IN AFTER ME, THROUGH THE DISTORTION AREA!
WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T TOUCH ME! YOU COULD DESTROY US BOTH!
"DESTROY...?" WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
NO TIME TO EXPLAIN, DARLING.
YOU'VE GOT TO HELP JOHNNY. BLASTAAR HAS CAPTURED THE COSMIC CONTROL ROD OF ANNIHILUS!!
IF HE CHANNELS HIS POWER THROUGH IT, WE'RE DOOMED!

STUPID EARTHLING! HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOU CAN EVADE...
EH?!?
MY BLAST DOES NOT REACH YOU...???
GUESS NOT, BIG B!
LOOKS AS IF MY ONE AND ONLY SISTER'S ON THE JOB!
SIS-TER ...?
THAT'S THE INVISIBLE WOMAN TO YOU, BLASTAAR.
AND I'LL JUST RE-LIEVE YOU OF THAT!
NO! NO! MY COSMIC CONTROL ROD!!
GIVE IT BACK TO ME! LET ME HAVE IT.!!
BLASTIE, BABY, YOU COULDN'T HAVE SET ME UP WITH A BET-TER CUE LINE IF YOU'D TRIED!
I'LL BE HAPPY TO LET YOU HAVE IT!
...eh?
TAP TAP
WHAM!
KRASH!
NO! NO! I SHALL NOT BE BEATEN!
I AM BLASTAAR! BLASTAAR!!


AND THAT MEANS NOTHING!
THE COSMIC CONTROL ROD WILL ABSORB ANY AMOUNT OF POWER YOU CAN THROW AT US.
AND EVEN WITHOUT IT, MY FORCE-FIELDS COULD CONTAIN YOUR BLASTS.
YOU'RE BEATEN, BLASTAAR.
...BEATEN...?
NO...NO... BLASTAAR CANNOT BE BEATEN!!
BLASTAAR IS SUPREME! BLASTAAR IS ALL-POWERFUL!
I WILL NOT LET MERE HUMANS DEFEAT ME!
I WILL NOT LET YOU... LET YOU...
!!...I WILL NOT LET YOU HURL THE CONTROL ROD INTO THE ATOMIC DISINTEGRATOR!!
...ATOMIC DISINTEGRATOR ...?
YES! I SEE NOW THAT IS YOUR GOAL!
STEALING THE ROD, USING IT AGAINST ME, THESE ARE NOT ENOUGH! YOU MEAN TO ANNIHILATE IT!
BY TOSSING IT IN THERE?
HEY, THANKS A BUNCH, BLASTIE! YOU DO HAVE A WAY OF MAKING LIFE EASIER!
JOHNNY!

JOHNNY, WAIT! I DON'T TRUST...
WHAT'S TO TRUST, SIS? IF BIG BAD BLASTAAR IS THAT EAGER TO STOP US TOSSIN' HIS TOY IN THERE...
...THEN IN IT GOES!
HA HA!
HA HA HA HA!
FOOL! FOOL OF A FOOL! YOU HAVE SIGNED YOUR OWN DEATH WARRANT!
uh oh
Hahh! BLASTAAR IS DEFEATED. BUT EVEN IN DEFEAT HE FINDS A WAY...
...TO DESTROY THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
Oo-hh, TORCHIE! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
Ungh!!
THAT BLAST! FORCE-FIELD WON'T STOP...
AT... LAST...
THE POWER IS MINE AGAIN!
IT SINGS IN MY SINEWS!
MY ONCE-WITHERED LIMBS GROW STRONG ONCE MORE!


ANNIHILUS
IS REBORN!!!


CENTRAL COMMAND CALLING COLONEL FURY! COME IN, COLONEL FURY! RESPOND!
ALARM
THIS... ≷CRACKLE≷... FURY! NOT... ≷ZKZKT≷... YOU, CAN YOU BOOST... ≷SNAP≷... REPEAT: CAN YOU BOOST SIGNAL?
NEGATIVE, COLONEL. WE'RE AT MAXIMUM GAIN! WE'RE RUNNING ON FULL EMERGENCY STATIONS!
THAT RIPPING EFFECT REED RICHARDS WARNED ABOUT IS HAPPENING!
THE WHOLE SPACE STATION IS BEING PULLED INTO IT!
AND IF IT KEEPS OPENING AT ITS PRESENT RATE, THE WHOLE EARTH WILL BE GONE IN LESS THAN FIVE HOURS!!!
SHIELD
next issue:
IT'S THE DEADLIEST GAME IN TOWN! YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS
RISK
--IN THIRTY DAYS!!

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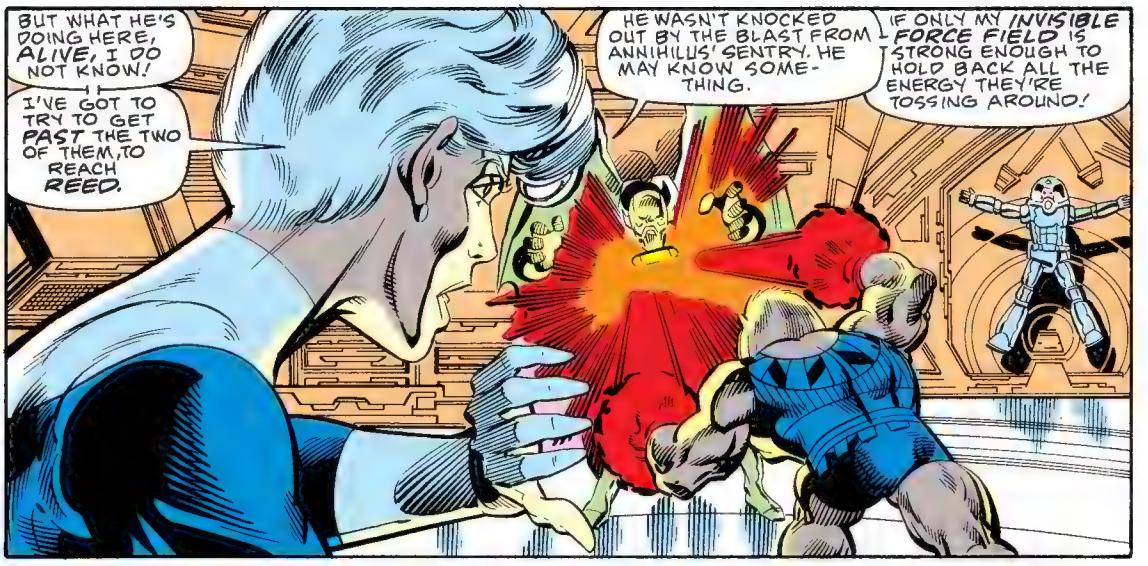
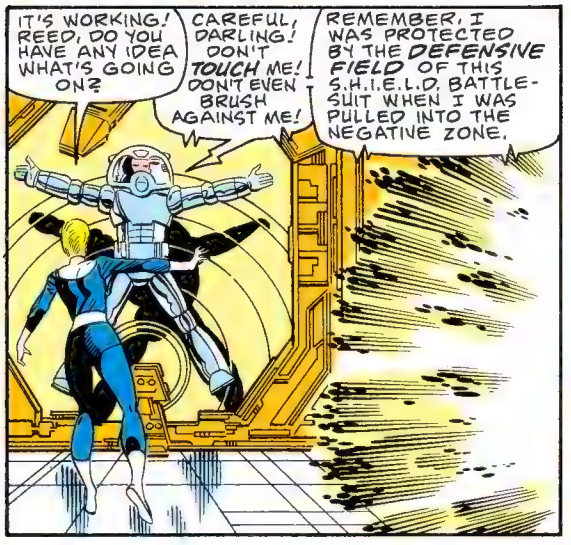
THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
Fantastic Four

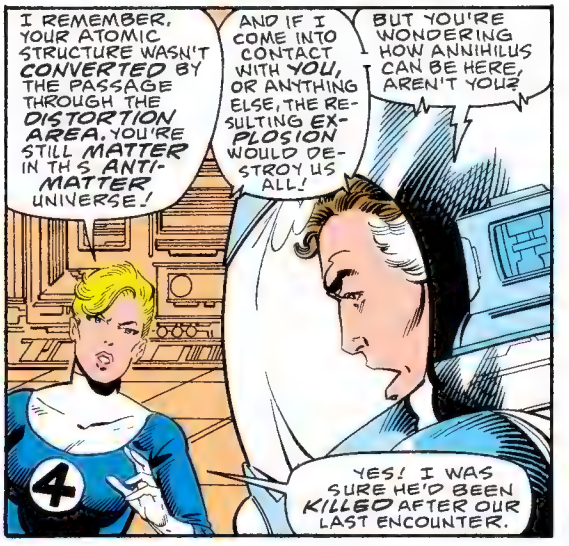
STAN LEE
PRESENTS
RISK
BEYOND TIME, BEYOND SPACE, THE NEGATIVE ZONE...
...WHERE COLD, UN-HUMAN LAUGHTER ECHOES BETWEEN THE HAUNTED STARS.
HAHAHAHA
HA HA HA HA HA
WRITTEN AND PENCILED BY
JOHN BYRNE
INKED BY
AL GORDON
COLORED BY
GLYNIS OLIVER
LETTERED BY
JOHN WORKMAN
EDITED BY
MICHAEL CARLIN
SUPERVISED BY
JIM SHOOTER

VICTORY IS MINE!
THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE FALLEN BEFORE THE POWER OF ANNIHILUS!
4

DO NOT BE SO QUICK TO CLAIM THE TRIUMPH FOR YOURSELF, INSECT. YOU WOULD STILL BE A HELPLESS PRISONER, BUT FOR BLASTAAR!
YOU...YOU DARE SPEAK THUS TO ME?!?
BUT FOR YOU I WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN A PRISONER!! IT WAS YOU WHO BETRAYED ME!
IT WAS YOU WHO HELD ME CAPTIVE TAUNTING ME WITH THE POWER OF THE COSMIC CONTROL ROD!
THAT SAME ROD WHICH YOU STOLE FROM ME!
AND WITH WHICH I SHALL NOW TAKE MY REVENGE!
AHGH!
Urggh...
WHAT GOES ON HERE...?
I THOUGHT WE HAD BLASTAAR NICELY AGAINST THE ROPES...THEN THIS CLOWN SHOWED UP...?
OHHHHH...
SUE! SUE, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT HIT US? WHO IS THIS GUY WITH THE WINGS?
ANNI-HILUS!
ONE OF THE MOST INSIDIOUS VILLAINS THE FF HAVE EVER FACED, SHE-HULK. HE LIVES ONLY TO DESTROY, TO ANNIHILATE!!

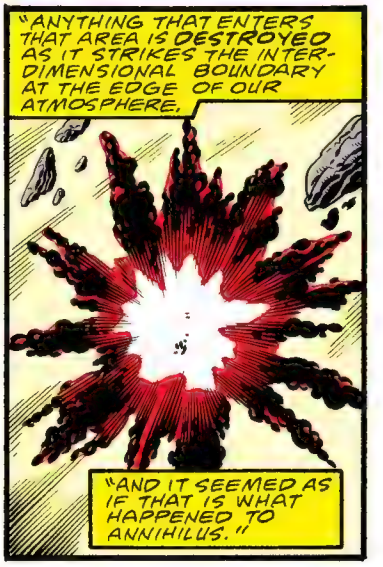

BUT WHAT HE'S DOING HERE, ALIVE, I DO NOT KNOW!
I'VE GOT TO TRY TO GET PAST THE TWO OF THEM, TO REACH REED.
HE WASN'T KNOCKED OUT BY THE BLAST FROM ANNIHILUS' SENTRY. HE MAY KNOW SOMETHING.
IF ONLY MY INVISIBLE FORCE FIELD IS STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD BACK ALL THE ENERGY THEY'RE TOSSING AROUND!


IT'S WORKING! REED, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON?
CAREFUL, DARLING! DON'T TOUCH ME! DON'T EVEN BRUSH AGAINST ME!
REMEMBER, I WAS PROTECTED BY THE DEFENSIVE FIELD OF THIS S.H.I.E.L.D. BATTLE-SUIT WHEN I WAS PULLED INTO THE NEGATIVE ZONE.

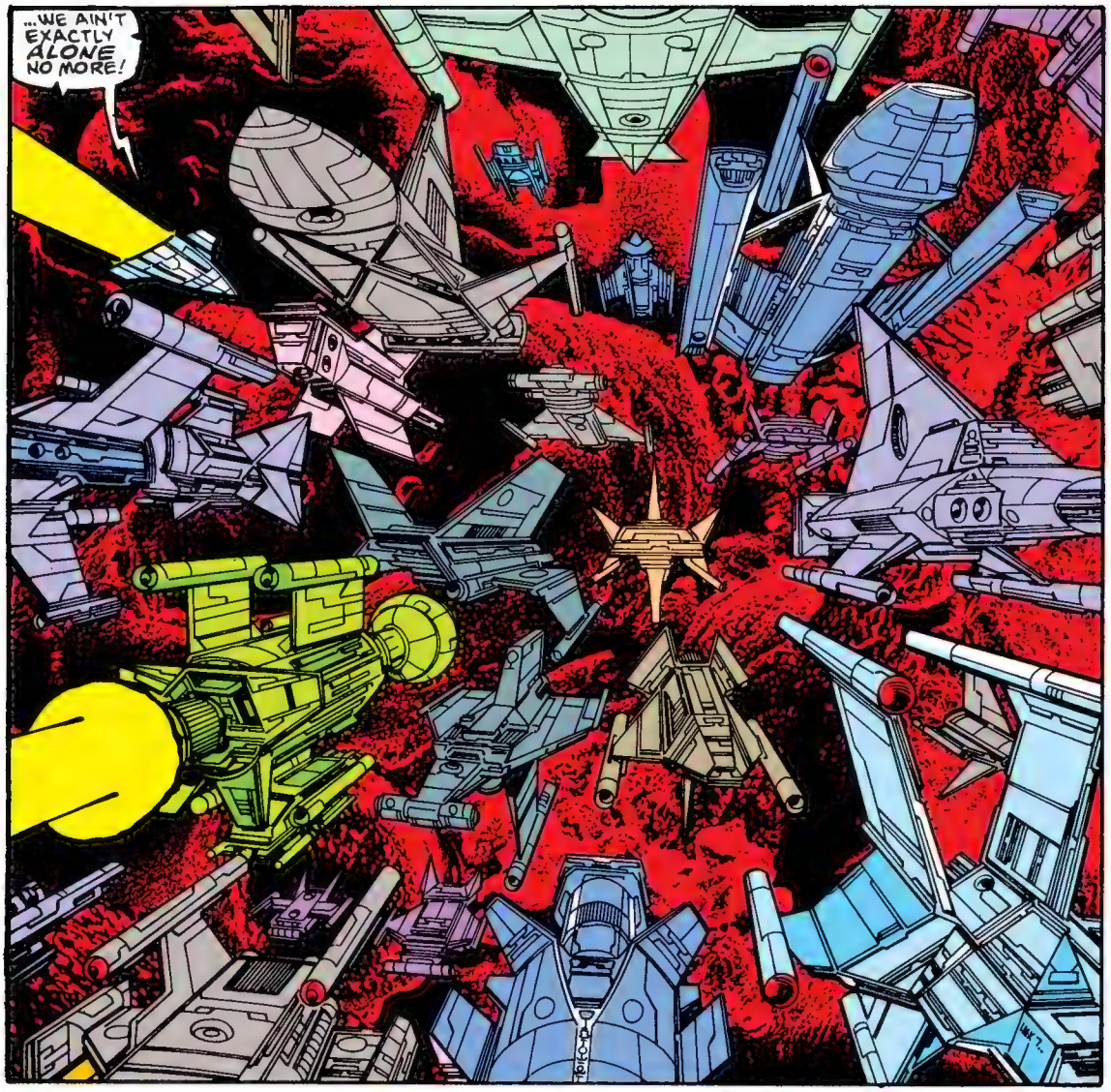

I REMEMBER. YOUR ATOMIC STRUCTURE WASN'T CONVERTED BY THE PASSAGE THROUGH THE DISTORTION AREA. YOU'RE STILL MATTER IN THIS ANTI-MATTER UNIVERSE!
AND IF I COME INTO CONTACT WITH YOU, OR ANYTHING ELSE, THE RESULTING EXPLOSION WOULD DESTROY US ALL!
BUT YOU'RE WONDERING HOW ANNIHILUS CAN BE HERE, AREN'T YOU?
YES! I WAS SURE HE'D BEEN KILLED AFTER OUR LAST ENCOUNTER.

"SO WAS I. BUT HIS PRESENCE HERE SUGGESTS A DIFFERENT SCENARIO.
"WHEN LAST WE SAW HIM, HE WAS FALLING BACK INTO THE NEGATIVE ZONE AFTER HIS ABORTED ATTACK ON OUR DIMENSION.

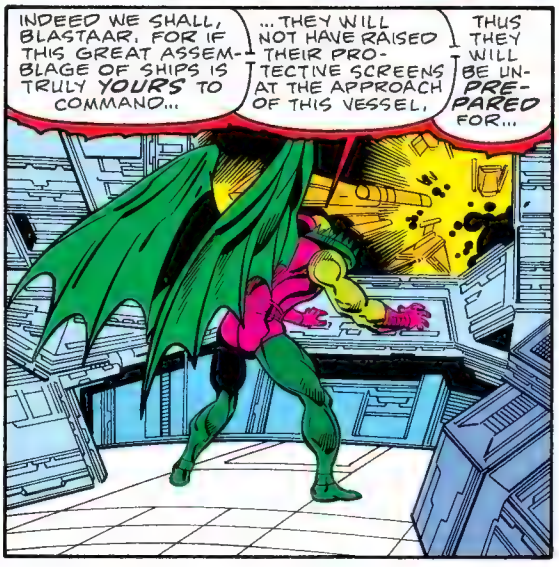
"EVENTS PRECIPITATED BY HIS ATTACK DID NOT PERMIT ME TO PROPERLY MONITOR HIS RETURN; BUT HE WAS DROPPED INTO THE EXPLOSIVE BELT, THE AREA OF INTERFACE AROUND THE EARTH.

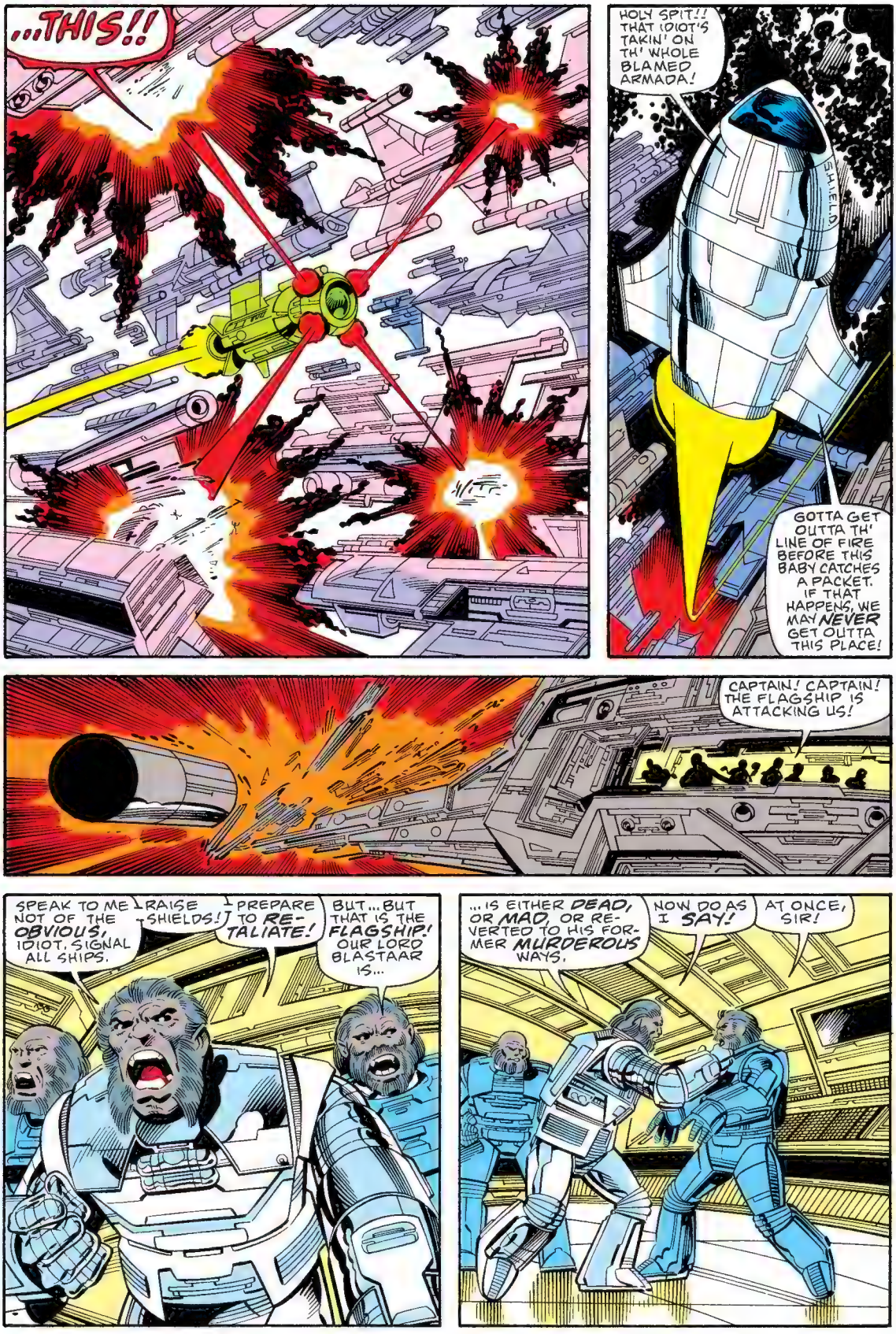

"ANYTHING THAT ENTERS THAT AREA IS DESTROYED AS IT STRIKES THE INTERDIMENSIONAL BOUNDARY AT THE EDGE OF OUR ATMOSPHERE.
"AND IT SEEMED AS IF THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ANNIHILUS."

OBVIOUSLY THAT WAS NOT THE CASE. BUT AS TO HOW HE SURVIVED-- THAT REMAINS A MYSTERY!
FOOL OF A FOOL!
EVEN THOUGH YOU HAVE REGAINED THE COSMIC CONTROL ROD, YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR BLASTAAR!
IN BLASTAAR'S HANDS DWELLS THE LIVING FURY, THE POWER OF THE BOMB-BURST!!
AND IN THE TIME I POSSESSED THE ROD, I USED IT TO MAKE MYSELF EVEN STRONGER!!
YOUR POWER IS GREAT, BLASTAAR. BUT IT IS DILUTED BY YOUR PUNY INTELLECT.
YEAHHGH!
THE COSMIC CONTROL ROD BELONGS ONLY TO ME! AND ONLY I CAN TAP ITS FULL POTENTIAL!
ONLY ANNIHILUS IS THE DEATH THAT WALKS!!
HE'S UNLEASHING ALMOST THE FULL POWER OF THE ROD! NOT EVEN BLASTAAR CAN WITHSTAND--!
A FAINT SIGNAL ON MY S.H.I.E.L.D. TRANSPONDER. IT MUST BE NICK FURY. HE'S STILL ON THE SHIP WE USED TO ENTER THE ZONE.
SUE, WHAT IS IT...?
I CAN'T MANIPULATE THE TUNING CONTROLS ON MY TRANSCEIVER WHILE I'M HELD IN THIS STASIS FIELD.
WHAT'S HE SAYING?
I CAN BARELY READ HIM...
FURY... CAN YOU ...BOOST SIGNAL...?
NO CAN DO, SUZIE. I'M AT FULL GAIN NOW. ANOTHER COUPLA SECONDS AN' THIS WHOLE BOARD'LL OVERLOAD.
SO LISTEN UP, KIDDO. I'VE BEEN FOLLOWIN' YOU SINCE YA BUSTED IN ON BLASTIE...
...AN' I THOUGHT YOU AN' YER LI'L PARTNERS MIGHT LIKE TA KNOW...


...WE AIN'T EXACTLY ALONE NO MORE!

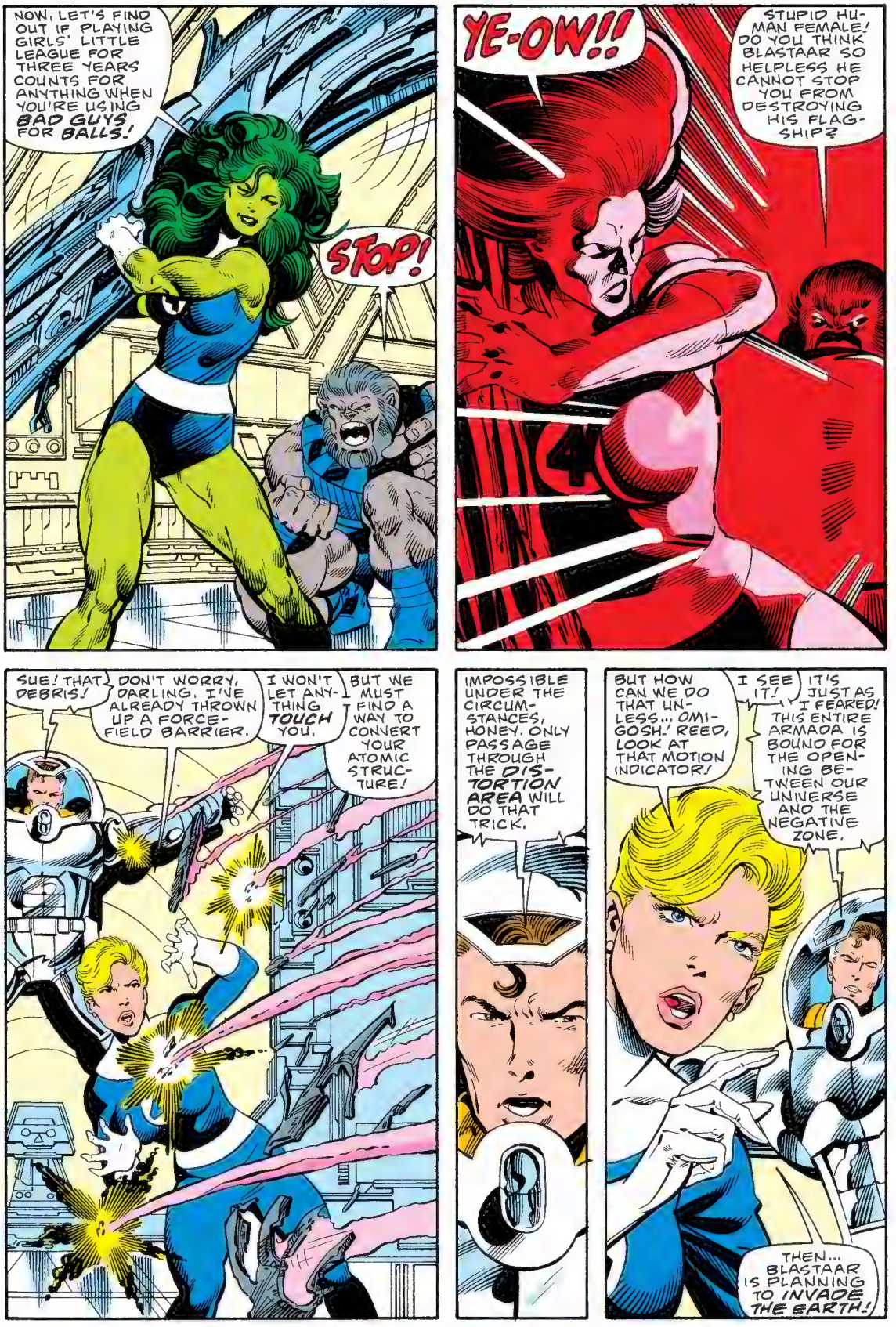
MY...:KOFF:... ARMADA! THE GLORIOUS LEGIONS OF THE PLANET BALUUR!
NOW WE SHALL SEE WHO IS TRULY VICTORIOUS, INSECT!


INDEED WE SHALL, BLASTAAR, FOR IF THIS GREAT ASSEMBLAGE OF SHIPS IS TRULY YOURS TO COMMAND...
...THEY WILL NOT HAVE RAISED THEIR PROTECTIVE SCREENS AT THE APPROACH OF THIS VESSEL,
THUS THEY WILL BE UNPREPARED FOR...

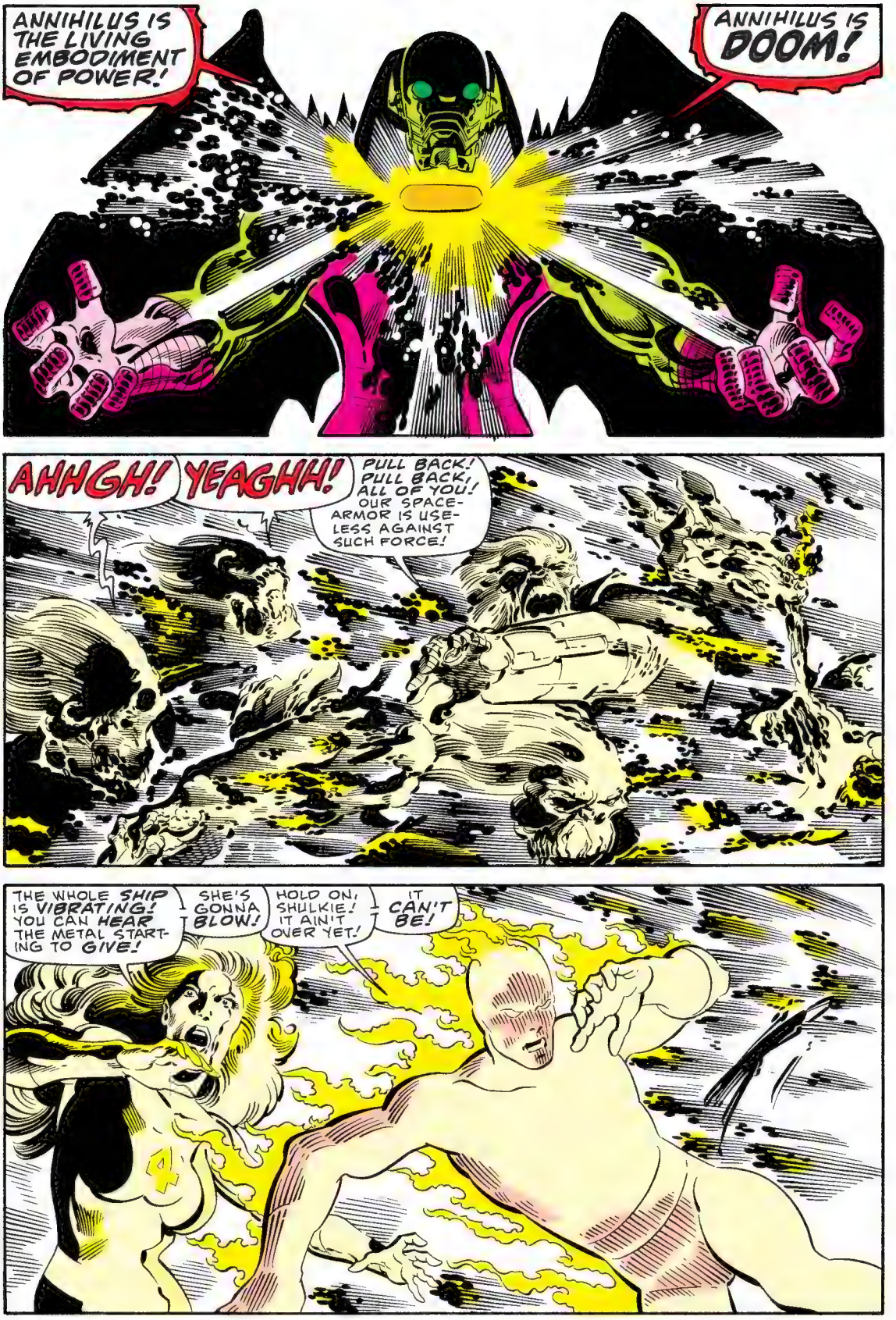

...THIS!!
HOLY SPIT!! THAT IDIOT'S TAKIN' ON TH' WHOLE BLAMED ARMADA!
S.H.I.E.L.D.
GOTTA GET OUTTA TH' LINE OF FIRE BEFORE THIS BABY CATCHES A PACKET. IF THAT HAPPENS, WE MAY NEVER GET OUTTA THIS PLACE!
CAPTAIN! CAPTAIN! THE FLAGSHIP IS ATTACKING US!
SPEAK TO ME NOT OF THE OBVIOUS, IDIOT. SIGNAL ALL SHIPS.
RAISE SHIELDS!
PREPARE TO RE-TALIATE!
BUT... BUT THAT IS THE FLAGSHIP! OUR LORD BLASTAAR IS...
...IS EITHER DEAD, OR MAD, OR RE-VERTED TO HIS FOR-MER MURDEROUS WAYS.
NOW DO AS I SAY!
AT ONCE, SIR!

HAVE A CARE, OLD FRIEND. DO NOT LET ANCIENT ANGERS SPUR YOU TO INCAUTIOUS ACTIONS!
AM I SO OBVIOUS, NUMBER ONE? IT IS TRUE. I HOLD IN MY HEART NO FONDNESS FOR OUR "LORD."
HE TOOK FROM ME THAT WHICH I CHERISHED MOST IN THE UNIVERSE!
BUT HE GAVE YOU, IN EXCHANGE, YOUR PRESENT RANK AND STATION. USE THEM WISELY, AND YOU MAY YET HAVE YOUR REVENGE!
AS EVER, YOUR COUNSEL IS WISEST OF ALL. I SHALL BE CAREFUL.
SIGNALMAN! OPEN A HAILING FREQUENCY TO THE FLAGSHIP. LET US LEARN WHO ATTACKS US.
HAILING FREQUENCY OPEN, SIR.
THIS IS THE CAPTAIN OF THE SWORD OF BALUUR, CALLING FIST OF POWER.
IDENTIFY YOURSELF ABOARD!
"FIST OF POWER?!"
WHAT AMUSING TITLES YOU GIVE YOUR PUNY VESSELS. HOW FOOLISHLY YOU SEEK TO FLAUNT YOUR IMAGINED MIGHT.
FOOLISHLY, WHEN ALL THAT LIVES IS AS NOTHING, BEFORE THE POWER OF ANNIHILUS!
ANNIHILUS?!?
TORCH!
Uhrrhh...
ANYBODY GET TH' NUMBER OF THAT SUPERNOVA?
SNAP OUT OF IT, TORCHIE!
THERE'S A WHOLE LOT OF BAD NASTINESS GOING DOWN, AND IT'S HIGH TIME WE STARTED DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

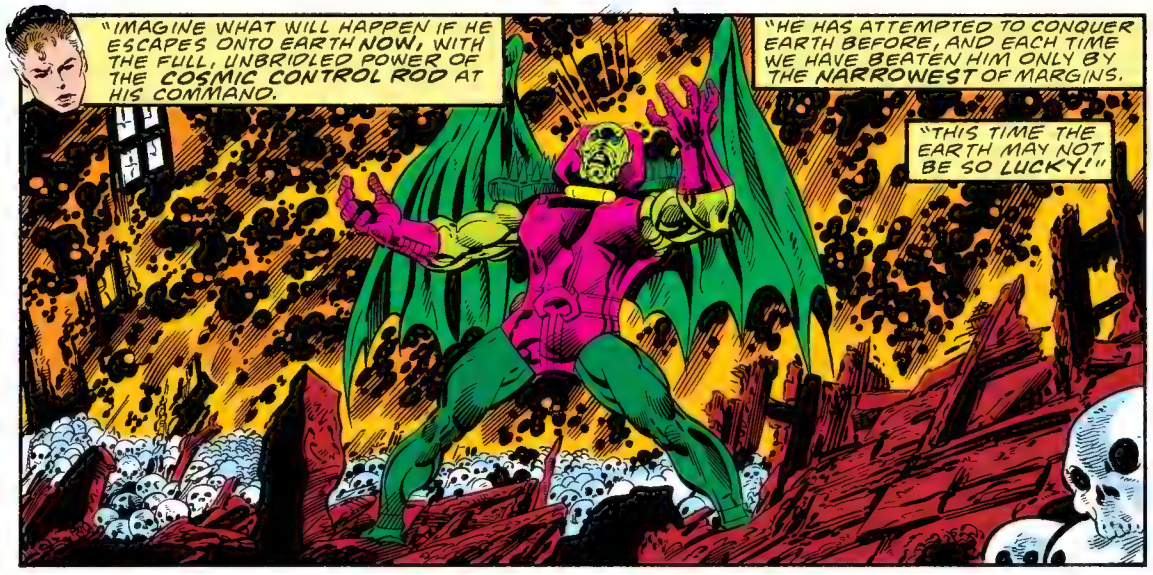
"BAD NASTINESS...?" OMIGOSH! THAT'S BLASTAAR AND ANNIHILUS! WHAT IN BLAZES IS GOIN' ON HERE?
BEATS ME, JOHNNY. I'M THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK. I'VE NEVER FACED THESE CREEPS BEFORE.
ALL I CAN TELL YOU IS, THEY'RE OBVIOUSLY UP TO NO GOOD.
NOW THAT'S GOTTA RANK AS THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE CENTURY, JEN.
THOSE TWO NEVER EVEN HEARD OF THE WORD "GOOD."
SO, WHATEVER THEY'RE UP TO, LET'S DERAIL IT! PRONTO!
FLAME ON!
EH?
THE HUMAN TORCH!
AN' SHE-HULK, TOO, BUNKIE! LET'S SEE HOW TOUGH YOU ARE IF I START DISMANTLING THIS HOLD-OVER FROM STAR WARS FOR YOU!
WRAKK!

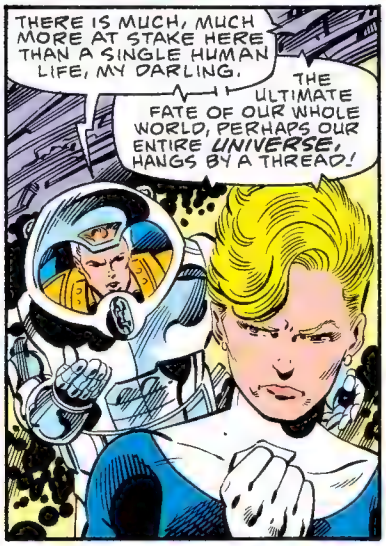

NOW, LET'S FIND OUT IF PLAYING GIRLS' LITTLE LEAGUE FOR THREE YEARS COUNTS FOR ANYTHING WHEN YOU'RE USING BAD GUYS FOR BALLS!
STOP!
YE-OW!!
STUPID HUMAN FEMALE! DO YOU THINK BLASTAAR SO HELPLESS HE CANNOT STOP YOU FROM DESTROYING HIS FLAGSHIP?
SUE! THAT DEBRIS!
DON'T WORRY, DARLING. I'VE ALREADY THROWN UP A FORCE-FIELD BARRIER.
I WON'T LET ANYTHING TOUCH YOU.
BUT WE MUST FIND A WAY TO CONVERT YOUR ATOMIC STRUCTURE!
IMPOSSIBLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HONEY. ONLY PASSAGE THROUGH THE DISTORTION AREA WILL DO THAT TRICK.
BUT HOW CAN WE DO THAT UNLESS... OMIGOSH! REED, LOOK AT THAT MOTION INDICATOR!
I SEE IT!
IT'S JUST AS I FEARED! THIS ENTIRE ARMADA IS BOUND FOR THE OPENING BETWEEN OUR UNIVERSE AND THE NEGATIVE ZONE.
THEN... BLASTAAR IS PLANNING TO INVADE THE EARTH!

A PLAN WE'LL NOW SEE COME TO PASS!!
EH? TANJAAR! AND A BOARDING PARTY!
YOUR ARRIVAL IS WELL-TIMED, CAPTAIN. DESTROY THESE INTERLOPERS!
NOT YET, BLASTAAR! NOT, AT LEAST, UNTIL WE ATTEND TO YOU!
WITH A WEAPON DESIGNED FOR JUST SUCH A TASK!
WHAT?! THE MOLECULAR INHIBITOR!!! YOU TRAITOROUS...
AHGGHH!
THE THETA RAY HAS LOCKED HIS MOLECULAR STRUCTURE! BLAST THE OTHERS!
TANJAAR COMMANDS!
LET THE INVASION OF THE PLANET EARTH CONTINUE IN MY NAME!
SHEESH! WHAT IS THIS? NATIONAL DUMP-ON-THE-FF DAY?
DOESN'T ANYBODY 'ROUND HERE WANNA BE FRIENDS?
A FOOLISH QUESTION, EXPRESSING AN EVEN MORE FOOLISH SENTIMENT.
FRIENDS ARE FOR THE WEAK, JOHNNY STORM.
AND YOU WILL ALL NOW LEARN ONCE AND FOR ALL THAT ANNIHILUS IS NOT WEAK!!


ANNIHILUS IS THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF POWER!
ANNIHILUS IS DOOM!
AHHGH!
YEAGHH!
PULL BACK! PULL BACK, ALL OF YOU! OUR SPACE-ARMOR IS USE-LESS AGAINST SUCH FORCE!
THE WHOLE SHIP IS VIBRATING! YOU CAN HEAR THE METAL START-ING TO GIVE!
SHE'S GONNA BLOW!
HOLD ON, SHULKIE! IT AIN'T OVER YET!
IT CAN'T BE!

FANTASTIC FOUR! FANTASTIC FOUR! THIS IS FURY! DO YA READ? YER SHIP IS BREAKIN' UP! DO YA NEED...
WAIT A SECOND...
Aw, CRUD! IT'S THAT ANNIHILUS CREEP! HE'S CUTTIN' OUT!
DO I HANG BACK AN' PICK UP TH' FF, OR...
...GO AFTER ANNIHILUS. THE DISINTEGRATION OF BLASTAAR'S SHIP HAS FREED ME FROM THE STASIS FIELD.
NOW I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS A CHANCE TO STOP ANNIHILUS!
REED, NO! I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING! IF YOU MAKE PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH ANNIHILUS...
...THE RESULTING EXPLOSION SHOULD SCATTER HIS ATOMS ACROSS HALF THE NEGATIVE ZONE, NOW I MUST...?!?
SUE! NO! YOU'VE PROJECTED A FORCE-FIELD BUBBLE AROUND ME!
AND I'M GOING TO KEEP IT THERE! I'M NOT ABOUT TO LET YOU COMMIT SUICIDE TO STOP ANNIHILUS!
THAT'S HARDLY MY INTENT, SUSAN. BUT I'VE LAID MY LIFE ON THE LINE FOR MANKIND MORE THAN ONCE BEFORE.
IF THAT IS THE ONLY OPTION NOW, I'LL DO SO AGAIN.
THE CHOICE, AFTER ALL, IS MINE.
NO, IT ISN'T! I'M YOUR WIFE, THE MOTHER OF YOUR SON!
I HAVE A SAY IN THIS MATTER! I HAVE AS MUCH A CLAIM... A GREATER CLAIM ON YOU THAN THE REST OF THE WORLD!
ENOUGH THAT YOU WOULD PREVENT ME DOING WHAT I HAVE TO DO? ENOUGH THAT YOU WOULD ALLOW ANNIHILUS TO REACH OUR DIMENSION?
HE LIVES ONLY TO DESTROY! AND HE THRIVES ON DEATH AND SUFFERING!

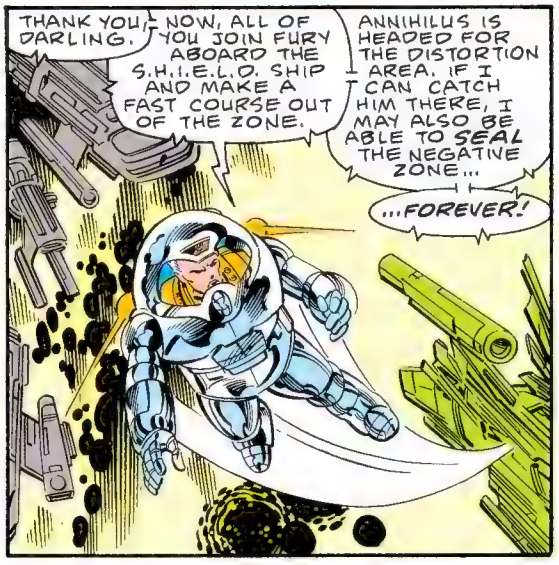

"IMAGINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF HE ESCAPES ONTO EARTH NOW, WITH THE FULL, UNBRIDLED POWER OF THE COSMIC CONTROL ROD AT HIS COMMAND.
"HE HAS ATTEMPTED TO CONQUER EARTH BEFORE, AND EACH TIME WE HAVE BEATEN HIM ONLY BY THE NARROWEST OF MARGINS.
"THIS TIME THE EARTH MAY NOT BE SO LUCKY!"


THERE IS MUCH, MUCH MORE AT STAKE HERE THAN A SINGLE HUMAN LIFE, MY DARLING.
THE ULTIMATE FATE OF OUR WHOLE WORLD, PERHAPS OUR ENTIRE UNIVERSE, HANGS BY A THREAD!

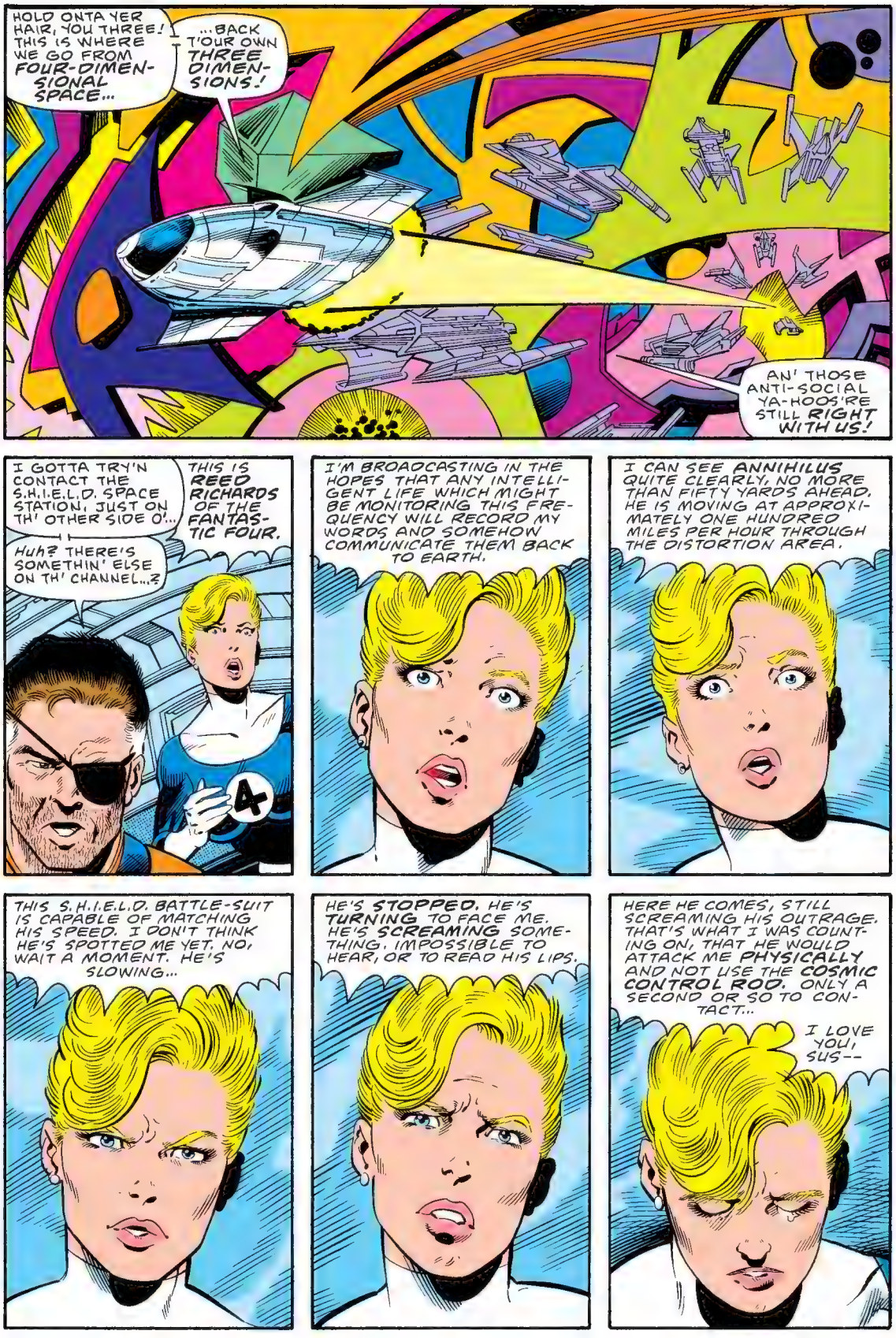
I KNOW ALL THAT. I'M NOT BLIND. BUT... BUT HOW CAN YOU BE CERTAIN YOU'LL SURVIVE!
HOW CAN YOU TAKE THIS INCREDIBLE RISK WITHOUT...

LIFE IS A RISK, SUSAN. WE NEVER KNOW FROM ONE MOMENT TO THE NEXT IF WE WILL SUCCEED OR FAIL.
BUT HERE AT LEAST WE KNOW THAT IF WE DO NOT ACT, WE CONDEMN UNCOUNTED BILLIONS TO HORRIBLE DEATHS.

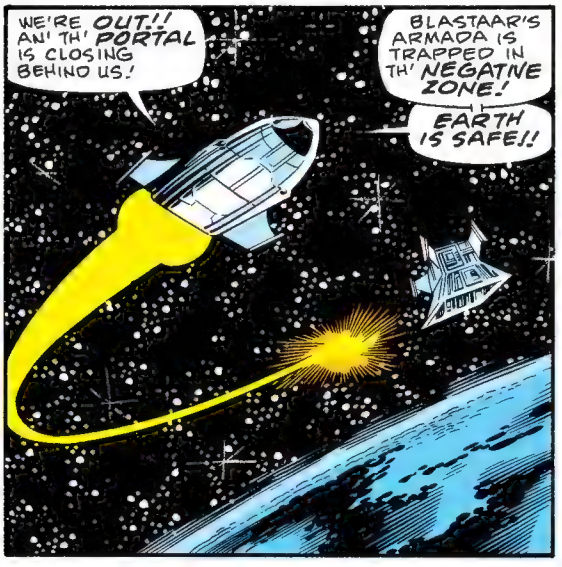
NOW, YOU MUST LOWER YOUR FORCE-FIELD, DARLING. THERE IS NO OTHER COURSE AVAILABLE. YOU KNOW THAT, IN YOUR HEART OF HEARTS.
I... I KNOW...
ALL RIGHT, REED. YOU'RE FREE TO GO... AND DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO.


THANK YOU, DARLING.
NOW, ALL OF YOU JOIN FURY ABOARD THE S.H.I.E.L.D. SHIP AND MAKE A FAST COURSE OUT OF THE ZONE.
ANNIHILUS IS HEADED FOR THE DISTORTION AREA. IF I CAN CATCH HIM THERE, I MAY ALSO BE ABLE TO SEAL THE NEGATIVE ZONE...
...FOREVER!

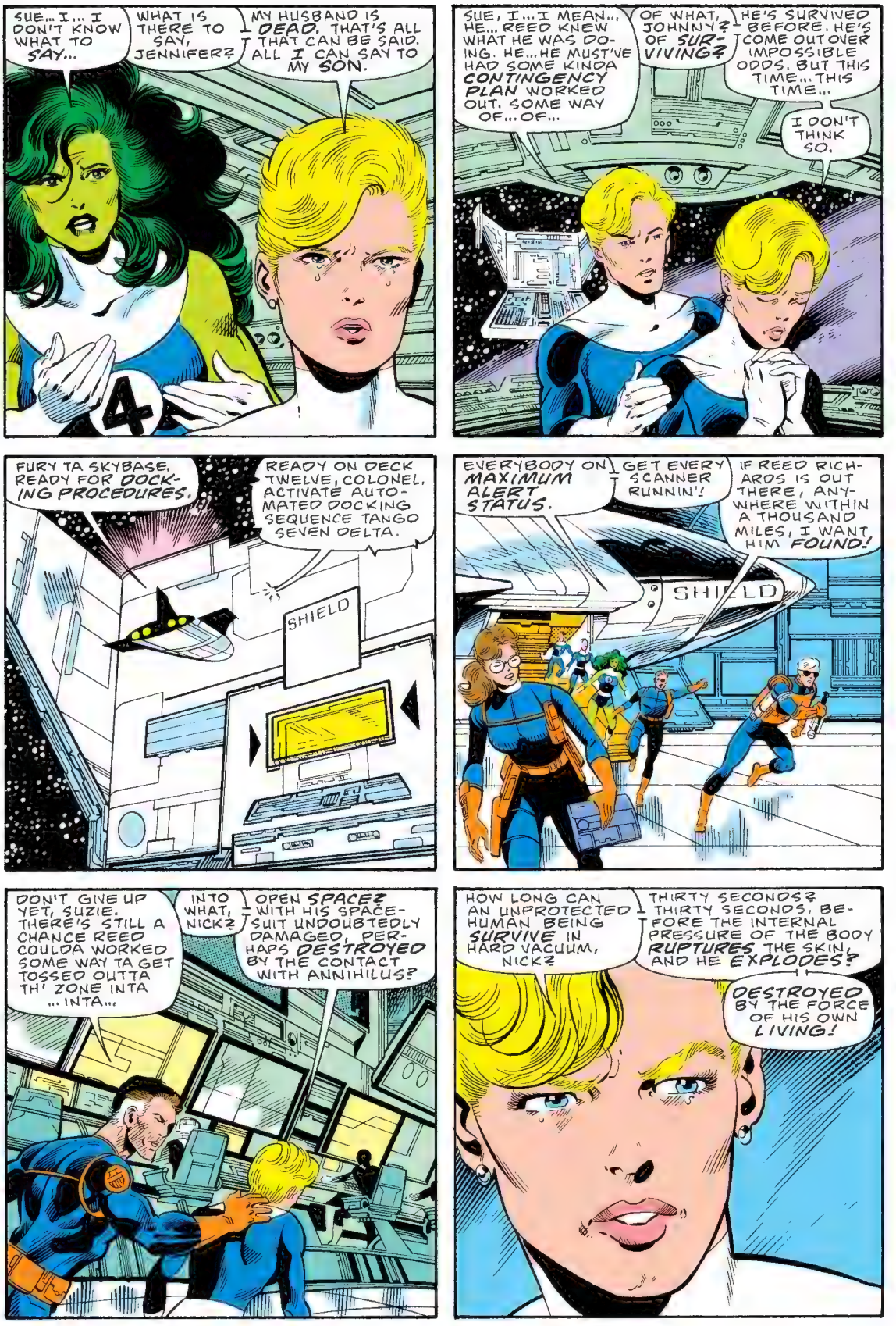
HURRY ON IN AN' BATTEN DOWN THEM HATCHES, KIDDIES. WE GOTTA HAUL OUR BUTTS OUTTA HERE--FAST.!!
SUZIE... I HEARD EVERY-THING REED SAID. I...
SAVE IT, NICK.
I'VE HAD TO LIVE WITH THE CONCEPT OF REED'S DEATH SINCE THE VERY FIRST TIME WE WENT INTO ACTION AS THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
I... JUST SOMEHOW NEVER EXPECTED TO STAND IDLY BY AND WATCH HIM MARCH OFF TO DIE LIKE A GOOD LITTLE SOLDIER.
SIS... DON'T...
BEIN' A GOOD SOLDIER AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' TA DO WITH IT, SUZIE. REED RICHARDS IS JUST ABOUT TH' BRAVEST MAN I KNOW, AND I'VE BEEN PLAYIN' FER THE HIGHEST STAKES LONG ENOUGH TO HAVE KNOWN MORE'N A FEW REAL HEROES.
NOW... HOLD ONTA SOME-THING.
I'M GONNA HAFTA DO SOME FANCY FLYING TA GET US ALL OUTTA THIS LOONEY BIN ALIVE!
THE REST O' BLASTAAR'S PALS SEEM REAL KEEN ON BLOWIN' US OUTTA TH' SKY!
WE'RE HEADING IN THE SAME GENERAL DIRECTION AS REED AND ANNIHILUS, BUT I DON'T SEE ANY SIGN OF EITHER OF 'EM. SHOULDN'T WE HAVE OVERTAKEN THEM BY NOW?
YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE, JUNIOR. SEEMS LIKE EVERY PART OF TH' NEGATIVE ZONE OPERATES ON A DIFFERENT TIME SCALE.
AN'...WELL, I ALSO AIN'T EX-ACTLY SURE OF HOW FAST WE'RE GOIN', PUNCHIN' THROUGH THAT CRAZY ATMOSPHERE OUT THERE!
BUT ONE THING'S FER SURE...
WE'RE COMIN' UP FAST ON TH' PASSAGE BACK TO OUR DIMENSION!
DISTORTION AREA DEAD AHEAD!!

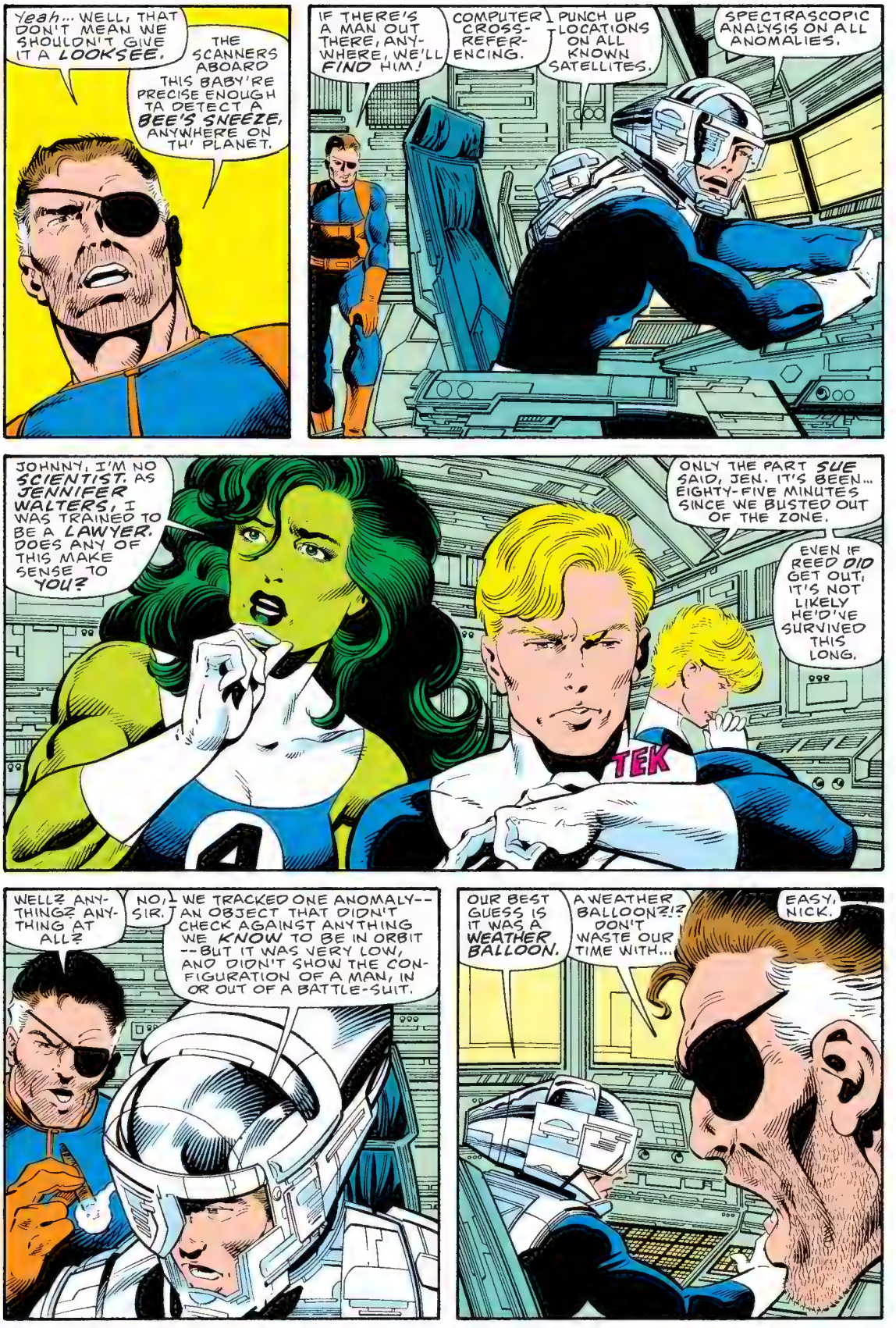

HOLD ONTA YER HAIR, YOU THREE! THIS IS WHERE WE GO FROM FOUR-DIMENSIONAL SPACE...
...BACK T'OUR OWN THREE DIMENSIONS!
AN' THOSE ANTI-SOCIAL YA-HOOS'RE STILL RIGHT WITH US!
I GOTTA TRY'N CONTACT THE S.H.I.E.L.D. SPACE STATION, JUST ON TH' OTHER SIDE O'...
THIS IS REED RICHARDS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
HUH? THERE'S SOMETHIN' ELSE ON TH' CHANNEL...?
I'M BROADCASTING IN THE HOPES THAT ANY INTELLIGENT LIFE WHICH MIGHT BE MONITORING THIS FREQUENCY WILL RECORD MY WORDS AND SOMEHOW COMMUNICATE THEM BACK TO EARTH.
I CAN SEE ANNIHILUS QUITE CLEARLY, NO MORE THAN FIFTY YARDS AHEAD. HE IS MOVING AT APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED MILES PER HOUR THROUGH THE DISTORTION AREA.
THIS S.H.I.E.L.D. BATTLE-SUIT IS CAPABLE OF MATCHING HIS SPEED. I DON'T THINK HE'S SPOTTED ME YET. NO, WAIT A MOMENT. HE'S SLOWING...
HE'S STOPPED. HE'S TURNING TO FACE ME. HE'S SCREAMING SOMETHING. IMPOSSIBLE TO HEAR, OR TO READ HIS LIPS.
HERE HE COMES, STILL SCREAMING HIS OUTRAGE. THAT'S WHAT I WAS COUNTING ON, THAT HE WOULD ATTACK ME PHYSICALLY AND NOT USE THE COSMIC CONTROL ROD. ONLY A SECOND OR SO TO CONTACT...
I LOVE YOU, SUS--

SHIELD
104

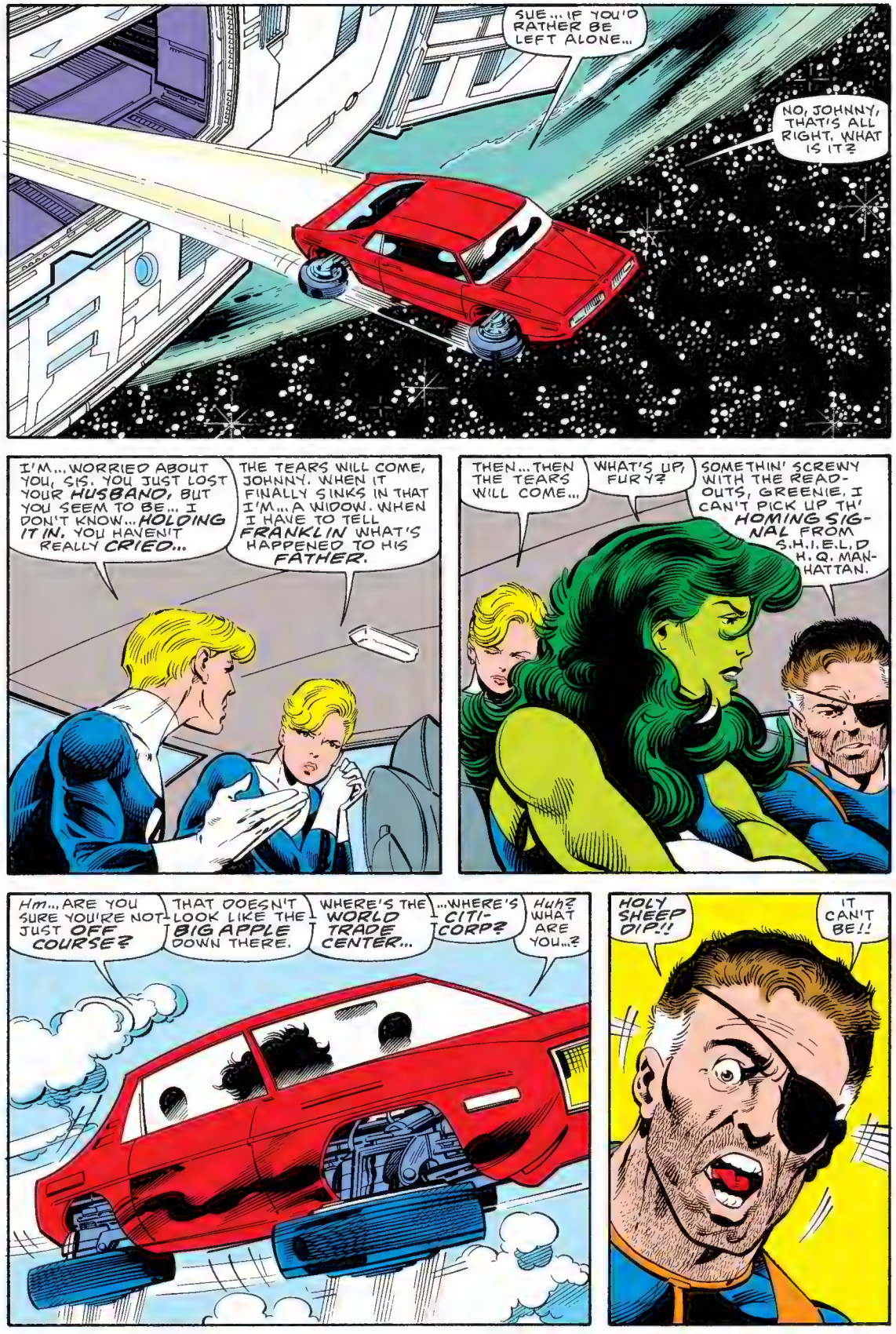

WE'RE OUT!! AN' TH' PORTAL IS CLOSING BEHIND US!
BLASTAAR'S ARMADA IS TRAPPED IN TH' NEGATIVE ZONE!
EARTH IS SAFE!!

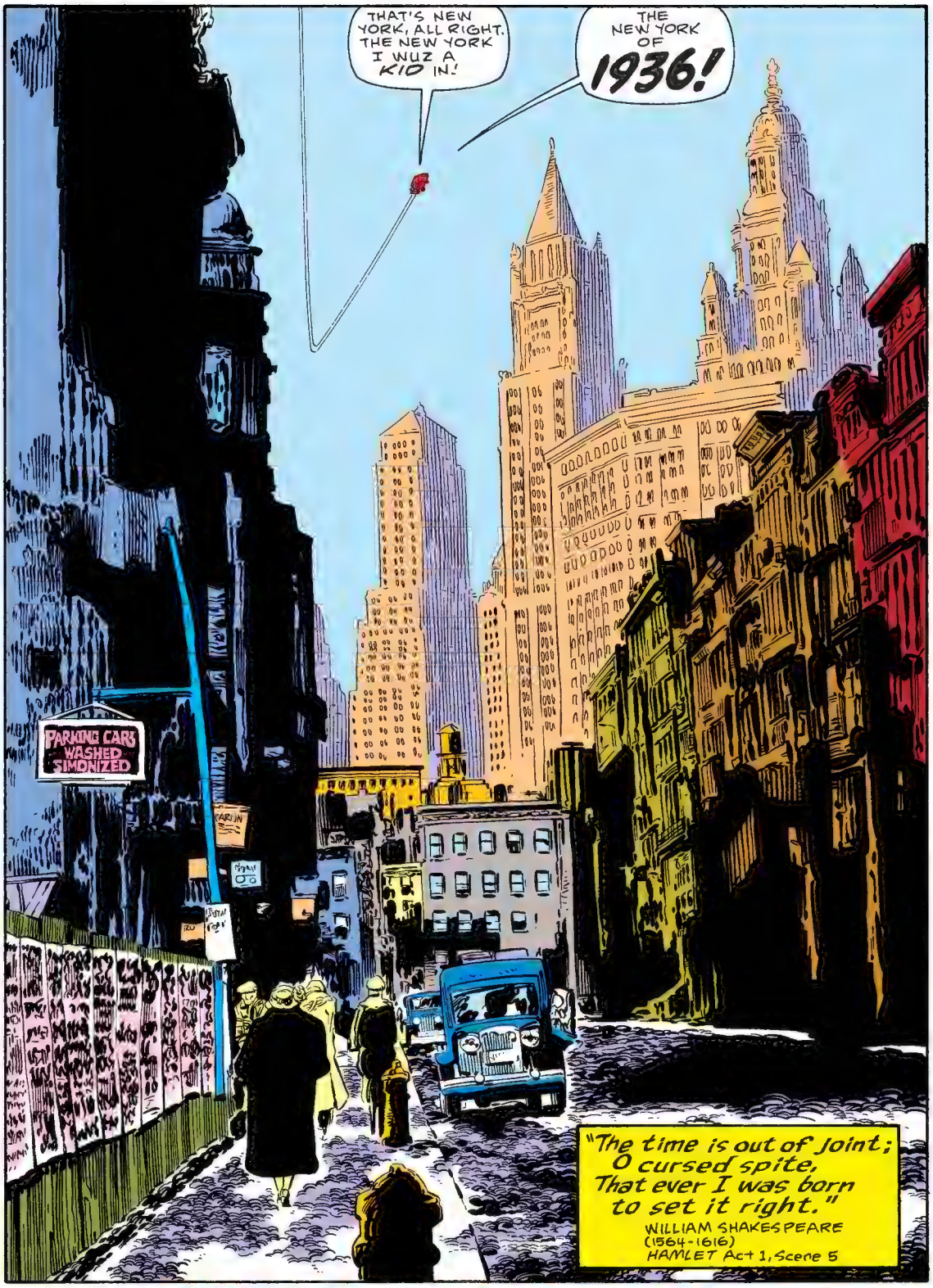
EARTH IS SAFE.
YES. EARTH IS SAFE AGAIN. A COSMIC MENACE HAS BEEN DEFEATED AGAIN.
GOOD TRIUMPHS OVER EVIL, AGAIN.
BUT... AT WHAT COST?
AT WHAT COST?!?
4


SUE... I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...
WHAT IS THERE TO SAY, JENNIFER?
MY HUSBAND IS DEAD. THAT'S ALL THAT CAN BE SAID. ALL I CAN SAY TO MY SON.
SUE, I... I MEAN... HE... REED KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING. HE... HE MUST'VE HAD SOME KINDA CONTINGENCY PLAN WORKED OUT. SOME WAY OF... OF...
OF WHAT, JOHNNY? OF SURVIVING?
HE'S SURVIVED BEFORE. HE'S COME OUT OVER IMPOSSIBLE ODDS. BUT THIS TIME... THIS TIME...
I DON'T THINK SO.
FURY TA SKYBASE. READY FOR DOCKING PROCEDURES.
READY ON DECK TWELVE, COLONEL. ACTIVATE AUTOMATED DOCKING SEQUENCE TANGO SEVEN DELTA.
SHIELD
EVERYBODY ON MAXIMUM ALERT STATUS.
GET EVERY SCANNER RUNNIN'!
IF REED RICHARDS IS OUT THERE, ANYWHERE WITHIN A THOUSAND MILES, I WANT HIM FOUND!
SHIELD
DON'T GIVE UP YET, SUZIE. THERE'S STILL A CHANCE REED COULDA WORKED SOME WAY TA GET TOSSED OUTTA TH' ZONE INTA ... INTA...
INTO WHAT, NICK?
OPEN SPACE? WITH HIS SPACESUIT UNDOUBTEDLY DAMAGED, PERHAPS DESTROYED BY THE CONTACT WITH ANNIHILUS?
HOW LONG CAN AN UNPROTECTED HUMAN BEING SURVIVE IN HARD VACUUM, NICK?
THIRTY SECONDS? THIRTY SECONDS, BEFORE THE INTERNAL PRESSURE OF THE BODY RUPTURES THE SKIN, AND HE EXPLODES?
DESTROYED BY THE FORCE OF HIS OWN LIVING!

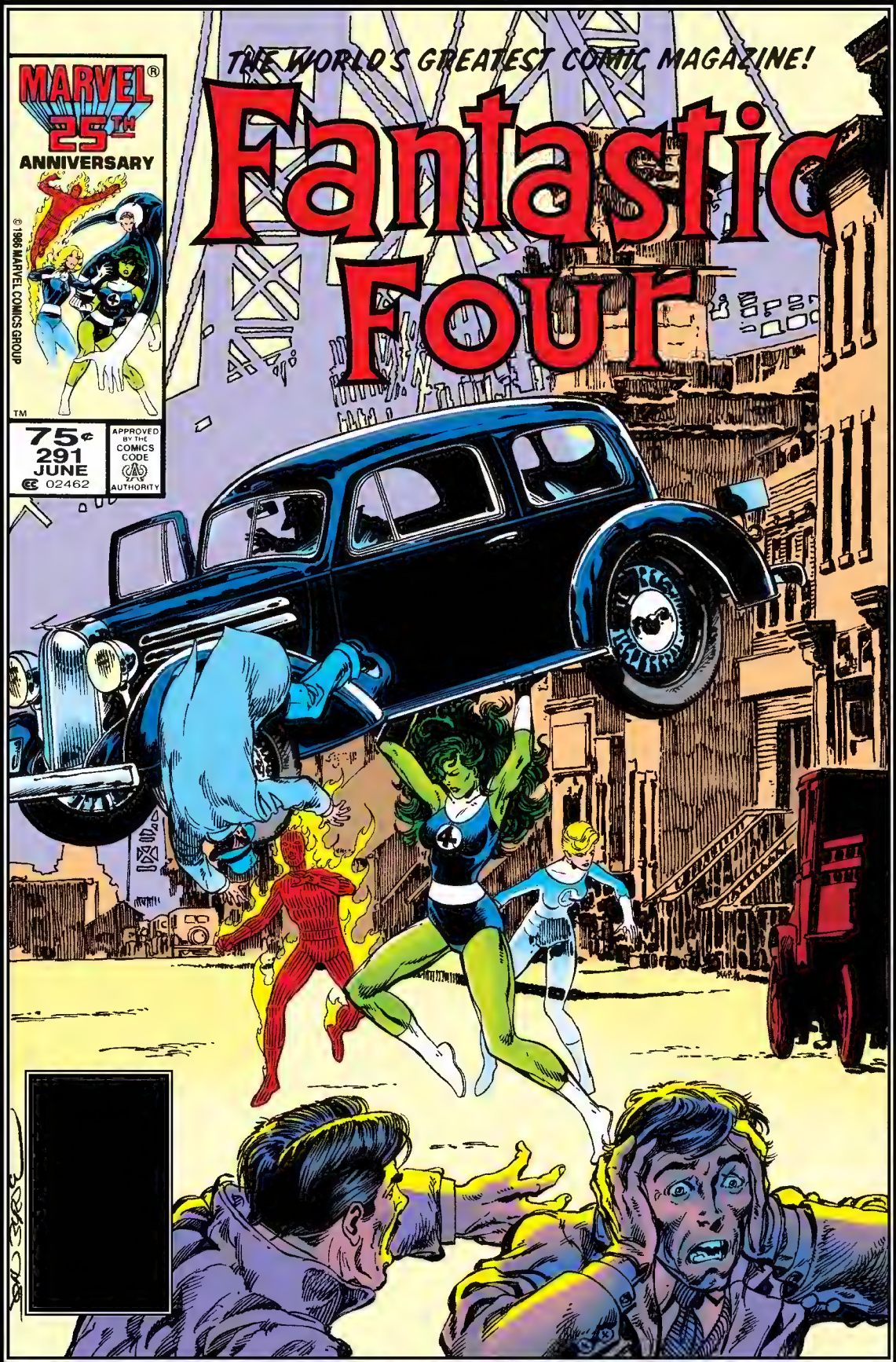

Yeah... WELL, THAT DON'T MEAN WE SHOULDN'T GIVE IT A LOOKSEE.
THE SCANNERS ABOARD THIS BABY'RE PRECISE ENOUGH TA DETECT A BEE'S SNEEZE, ANYWHERE ON TH' PLANET.
IF THERE'S A MAN OUT THERE, ANYWHERE, WE'LL FIND HIM!
COMPUTER CROSS-REFERENCING.
PUNCH UP LOCATIONS ON ALL KNOWN SATELLITES.
SPECTRASCOPIC ANALYSIS ON ALL ANOMALIES.
JOHNNY, I'M NO SCIENTIST. AS JENNIFER WALTERS, I WAS TRAINED TO BE A LAWYER. DOES ANY OF THIS MAKE SENSE TO YOU?
ONLY THE PART SUE SAID, JEN. IT'S BEEN... EIGHTY-FIVE MINUTES SINCE WE BUSTED OUT OF THE ZONE.
EVEN IF REED DID GET OUT, IT'S NOT LIKELY HE'D'VE SURVIVED THIS LONG.
TEK
WELL? ANYTHING? ANYTHING AT ALL?
NO, SIR.
WE TRACKED ONE ANOMALY--AN OBJECT THAT DIDN'T CHECK AGAINST ANYTHING WE KNOW TO BE IN ORBIT--BUT IT WAS VERY LOW, AND DIDN'T SHOW THE CONFIGURATION OF A MAN, IN OR OUT OF A BATTLE-SUIT.
OUR BEST GUESS IS IT WAS A WEATHER BALLOON.
A WEATHER BALLOON?!? DON'T WASTE OUR TIME WITH...
EASY, NICK.

SUZIE ...I...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING MORE, NICK.
YOU'VE DONE WHAT YOU COULD. BUT IN THE LONG RUN, THERE WAS NOTHING THAT COULD BE DONE. NOT NOW.
REED IS DEAD.
WE MUST ALL ACCEPT THAT...
... AND TAKE SUCH SOLACE AS WE CAN FROM THE FACT THAT HE GAVE HIS LIFE TO SAVE MANKIND.
AND THAT IS THE WAY HE WOULD HAVE WANTED IT.
FOR THE REST OF US...
ALL WE CAN DO IS GO ON WITH OUR LIVES.
THAT'S SOMETHING ELSE REED WOULD HAVE WANTED...


SUE... IF YOU'D RATHER BE LEFT ALONE...
NO, JOHNNY, THAT'S ALL RIGHT. WHAT IS IT?
I'M... WORRIED ABOUT YOU, SIS. YOU JUST LOST YOUR HUSBAND, BUT YOU SEEM TO BE... I DON'T KNOW... HOLDING IT IN. YOU HAVEN'T REALLY CRIED...
THE TEARS WILL COME, JOHNNY. WHEN IT FINALLY SINKS IN THAT I'M... A WIDOW. WHEN I HAVE TO TELL FRANKLIN WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIS FATHER.
THEN... THEN THE TEARS WILL COME...
WHAT'S UP, FURY?
SOMETHIN' SCREWY WITH THE READ-OUTS, GREENIE, I CAN'T PICK UP TH' HOMING SIGNAL FROM S.H.I.E.L.D H.Q. MANHATTAN.
Hm... ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT JUST OFF COURSE?
THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THE BIG APPLE DOWN THERE.
WHERE'S THE WORLD TRADE CENTER...
...WHERE'S CITICORP?
Huh? WHAT ARE YOU...?
HOLY SHEEP DIP!!
IT CAN'T BE!!


THAT'S NEW YORK, ALL RIGHT. THE NEW YORK I WUZ A KID IN!
THE NEW YORK OF 1936!
PARKING CARS WASHED SIMONIZED
"The time is out of joint; O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right."
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616) HAMLET Act 1, Scene 5

NEXT ISSUE: THE TIMES THEY ARE A'CHANGING IN 30 DAYS


THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
Fantastic Four
MARVEL
25TH
ANNIVERSARY
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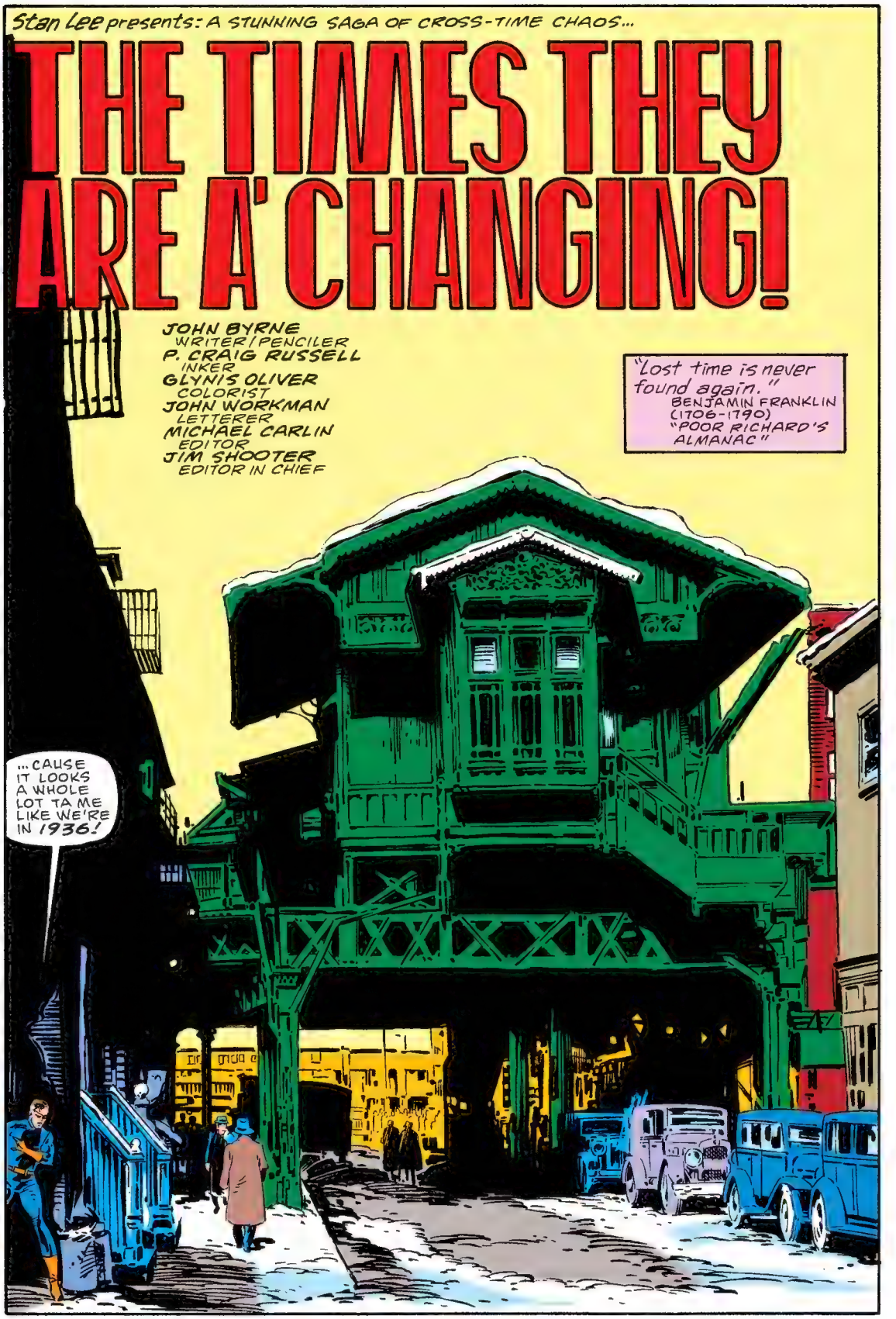
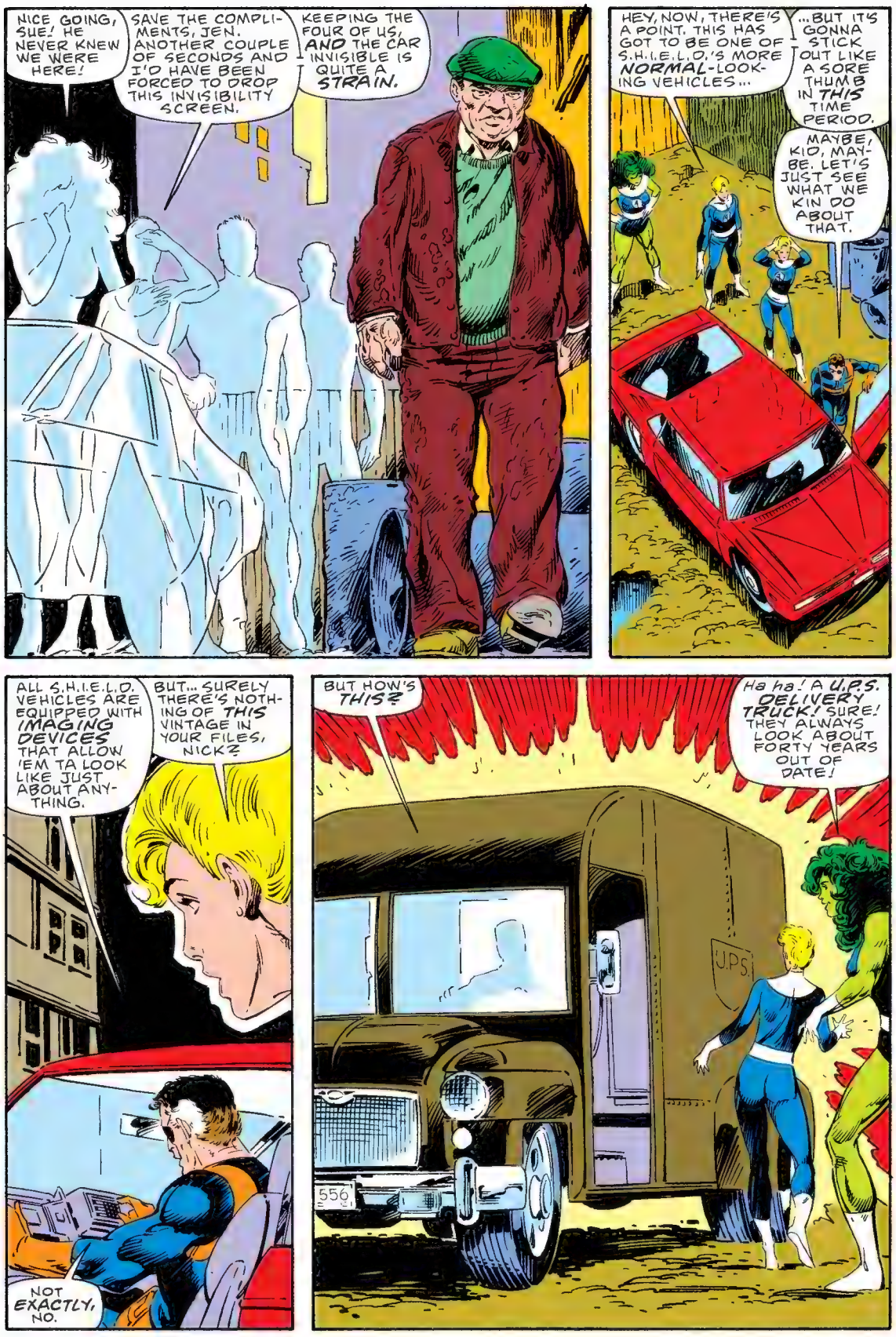
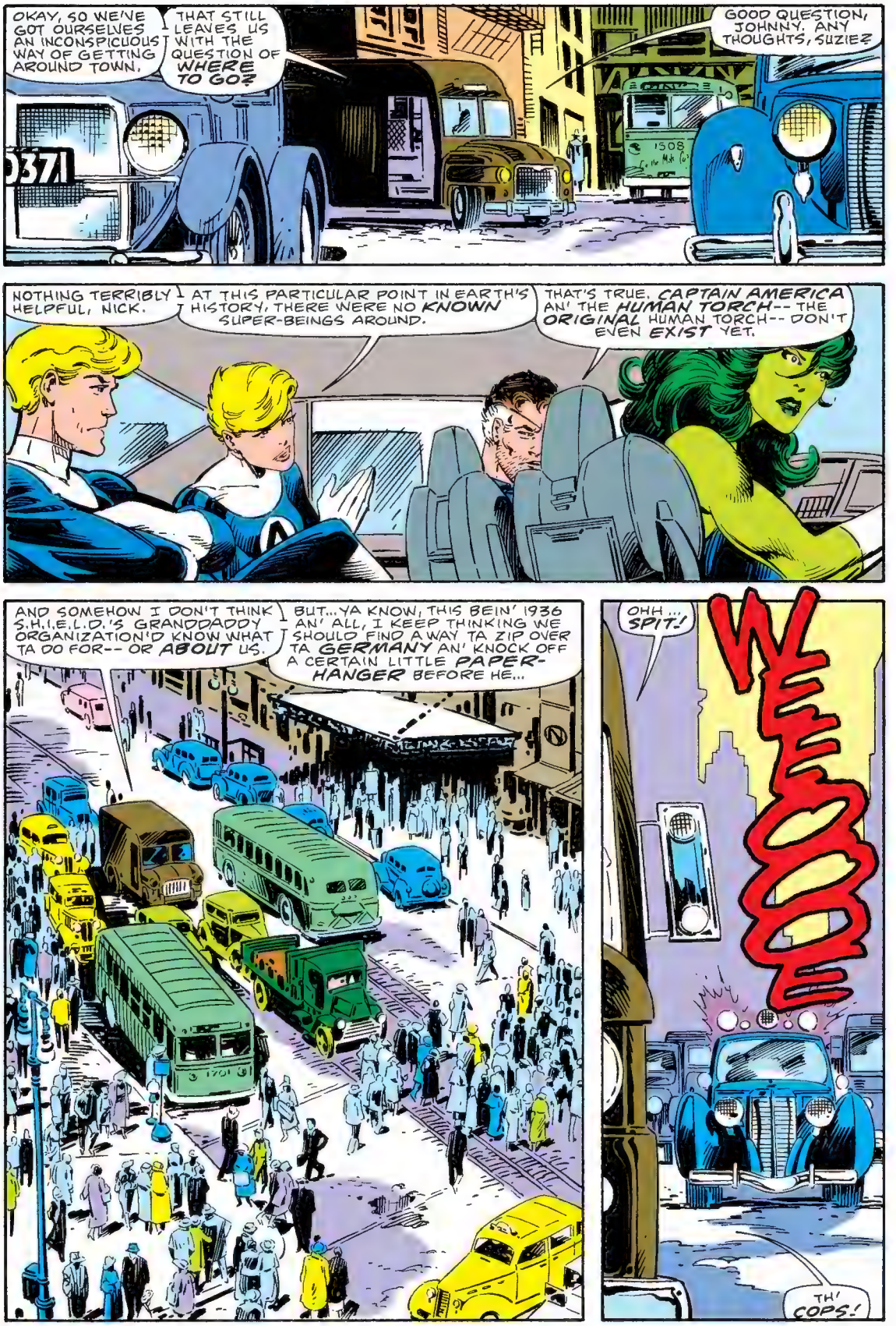
TM
75¢
291
JUNE
02462
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

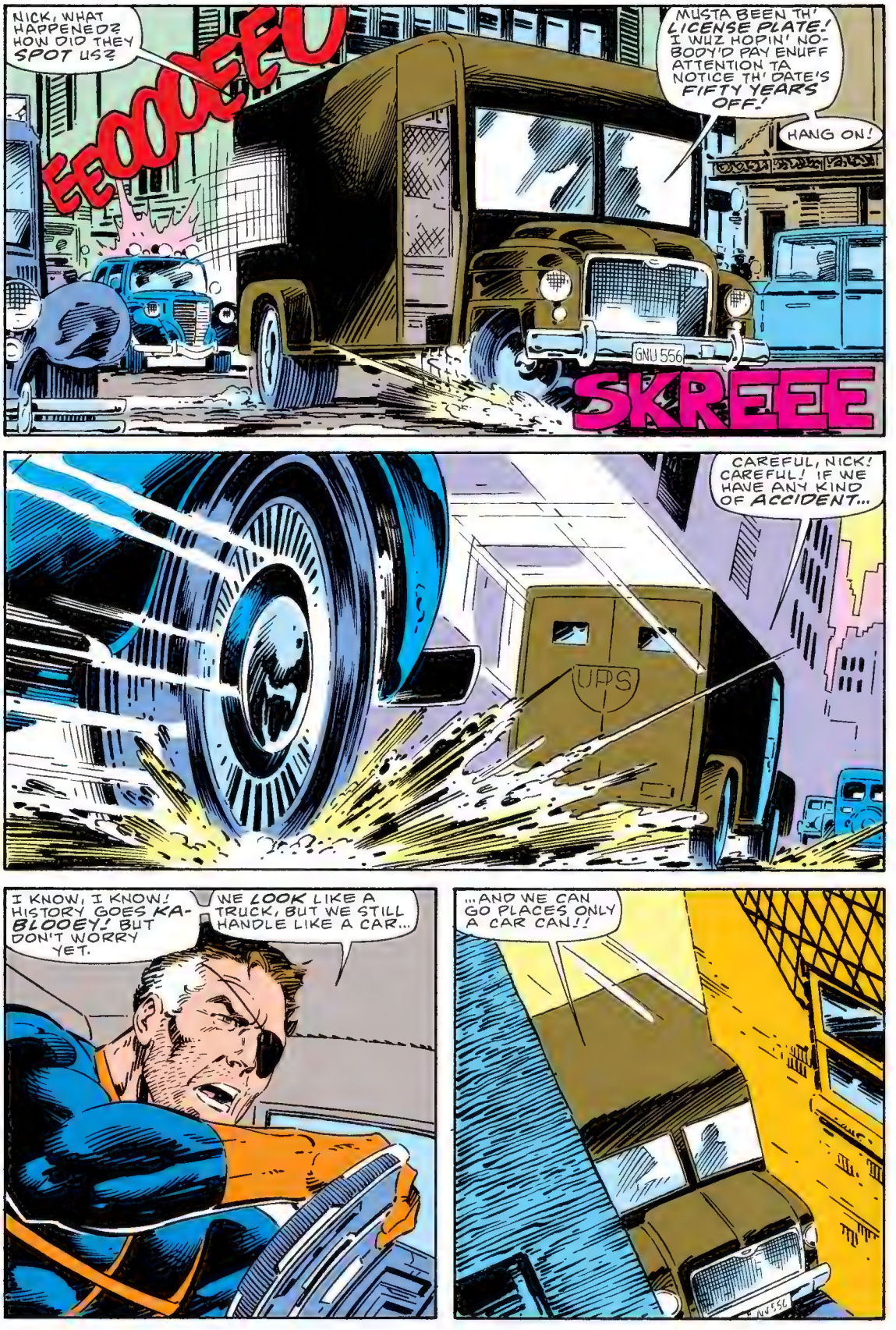
GREENWICH VILLAGE, NEW YORK. 3:45 P.M.
IN A DARKENED ALLEYWAY NEAR CHRISTOPHER STREET, A S.H.I.E.L.D.* FLYING CAR SETTLES SILENTLY TO THE SNOW-SLICKED PAVEMENT...
CNU 556
*SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE AND LAW-ENFORCEMENT DIVISION.
MAN, OH MAN, IS THIS WILD! EVEN THE AIR TASTES DIFFERENT!
BETTER KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, TORCHIE. AT LEAST UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.
VERY GOOD ADVICE, SHE-HULK. EVEN BLASÉ NEW YORKERS MIGHT BE NONPLUSSED BY YOU!
ASSUMING COLONEL FURY'S ESTIMATION OF OUR PRESENT SITUATION IS CORRECT...
...NICK?
OH, DON'TCHA WORRY YER PRETTY HEAD ABOUT THAT, SUZIE. WE ARE WHERE I SAID WE ARE... OR MORE LIKE WHEN.
I KNOW THESE STREETS LIKE TH' BACKA MY HAND. I GREW UP, NOT FAR FROM HERE. AN' RIGHT ABOUT NOW, SOMEWHERES OUT THERE, I'M RUNNIN' 'ROUND AS A TEENAGER...


Stan Lee presents: A STUNNING SAGA OF CROSS-TIME CHAOS...
THE TIMES THEY ARE A' CHANGING!
JOHN BYRNE
WRITER/PENCILER
P. CRAIG RUSSELL
INKER
GLYNIS OLIVER
COLORIST
JOHN WORKMAN
LETTERER
MICHAEL CARLIN
EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR IN CHIEF
"Lost time is never found again."
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
(1706-1790)
"POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC"
...CAUSE IT LOOKS A WHOLE LOT TA ME LIKE WE'RE IN 1936!

BUT... HOW CAN THAT BE?
NOT TWENTY MINUTES AGO, WE WERE UP IN ORBIT, ABOARD THE S.H.I.E.L.D. SPACE STATION...
AND IT SURE DIDN'T SEEM LIKE WE PASSED THROUGH ANY TIME-WARPS GETTING DOWN HERE.
SIS, HAVE YOU GOT ANY SUGGESTIONS? I MEAN, YOU'RE THE LEADER NOW THAT...
I MEAN...
NOW THAT REED IS DEAD?
YOU CAN SAY IT, JOHNNY. THERE'S NO POINT TRYING TO SIDE-STEP THAT FACT, EVEN IN THE FACE OF THIS IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION.
MY HUSBAND, OUR LEADER, IS DEAD.
BUT HE WOULD WANT THE FANTASTIC FOUR TO GO ON, EVEN WITHOUT HIS BRILLIANT MIND TO GUIDE US.
ALTHOUGH HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS WE COULD USE HIS SCIENTIFIC GENIUS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE WORLD.
IF ONLY THERE WAS SOMEONE...SOMEONE WE COULD SAFELY CONTACT, HERE IN 1936.
BUT WE DARE NOT RISK MAKING CONTACT WITH ANYONE FROM THIS TIME.
YEAH, WELL, WE AIN'T GONNA HAVE A WHOLE BUNCHA CHOICE IN ABOUT A MINUTE. LOOKS LIKE T'DAY'S TH' DAY THEY PICK UP TH' GARBAGE...
...AN' HERE WE ARE SURROUNDED BY TRASH-CANS.!
DON'T WORRY, NICK. REMEMBER, MY POWERS AS THE INVISIBLE WOMAN INCLUDE MORE THAN BEING ABLE TO MAKE JUST MYSELF TRANSPARENT.
HEY.! I'M FADIN' OUT.!

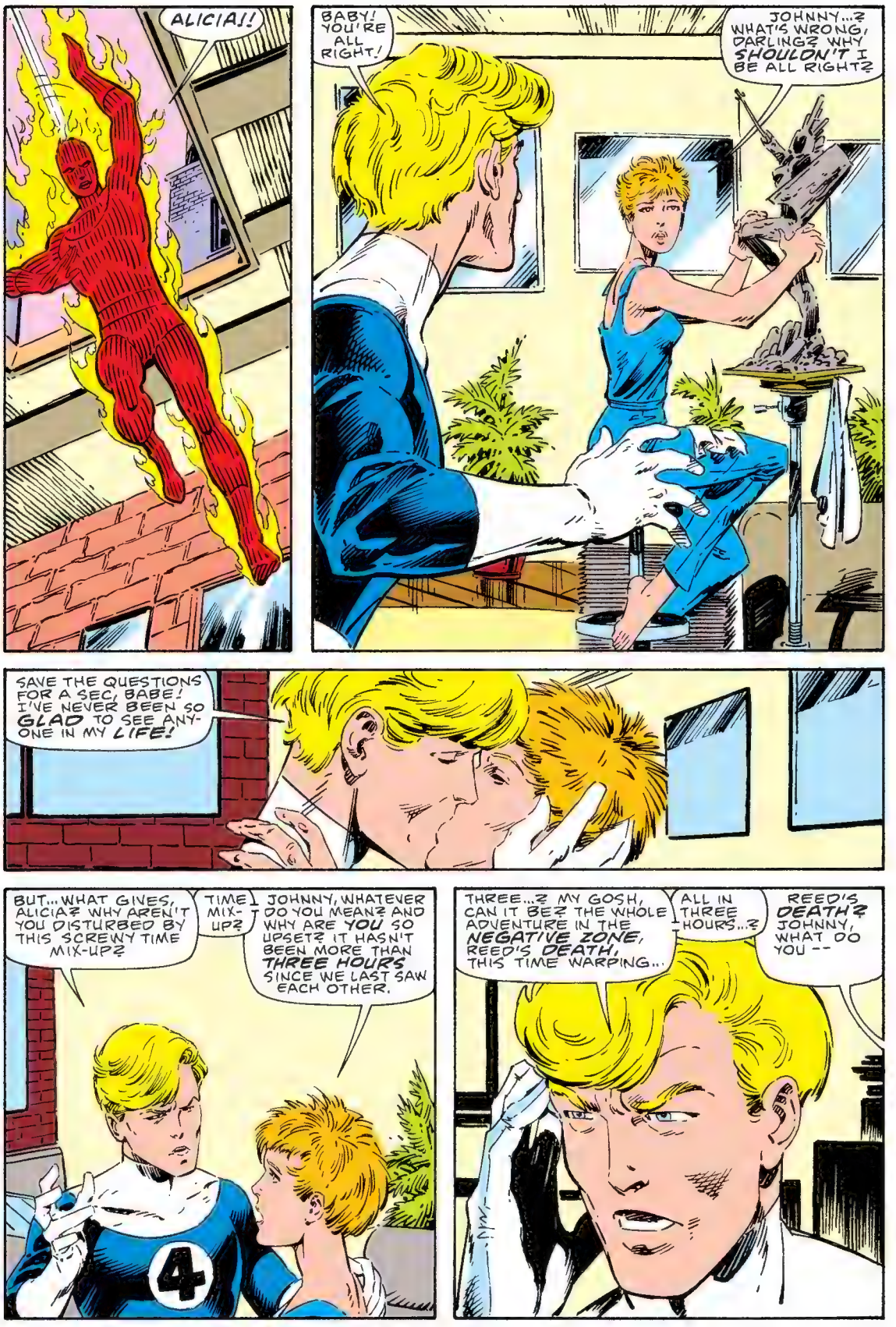

NICE GOING, SUE! HE NEVER KNEW WE WERE HERE!
SAVE THE COMPLIMENTS, JEN. ANOTHER COUPLE OF SECONDS AND I'D HAVE BEEN FORCED TO DROP THIS INVISIBILITY SCREEN.
KEEPING THE FOUR OF US, AND THE CAR INVISIBLE IS QUITE A STRAIN.
HEY, NOW, THERE'S A POINT. THIS HAS GOT TO BE ONE OF S.H.I.E.L.D.'S MORE NORMAL-LOOKING VEHICLES...
...BUT IT'S GONNA STICK OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB IN THIS TIME PERIOD.
MAYBE, KID, MAYBE. LET'S JUST SEE WHAT WE KIN DO ABOUT THAT.
ALL S.H.I.E.L.D. VEHICLES ARE EQUIPPED WITH IMAGING DEVICES THAT ALLOW 'EM TA LOOK LIKE JUST ABOUT ANYTHING.
BUT... SURELY THERE'S NOTHING OF THIS VINTAGE IN YOUR FILES, NICK?
NOT EXACTLY, NO.
BUT HOW'S THIS?
Ha ha! A U.P.S. DELIVERY TRUCK! SURE! THEY ALWAYS LOOK ABOUT FORTY YEARS OUT OF DATE!
U.P.S.
556

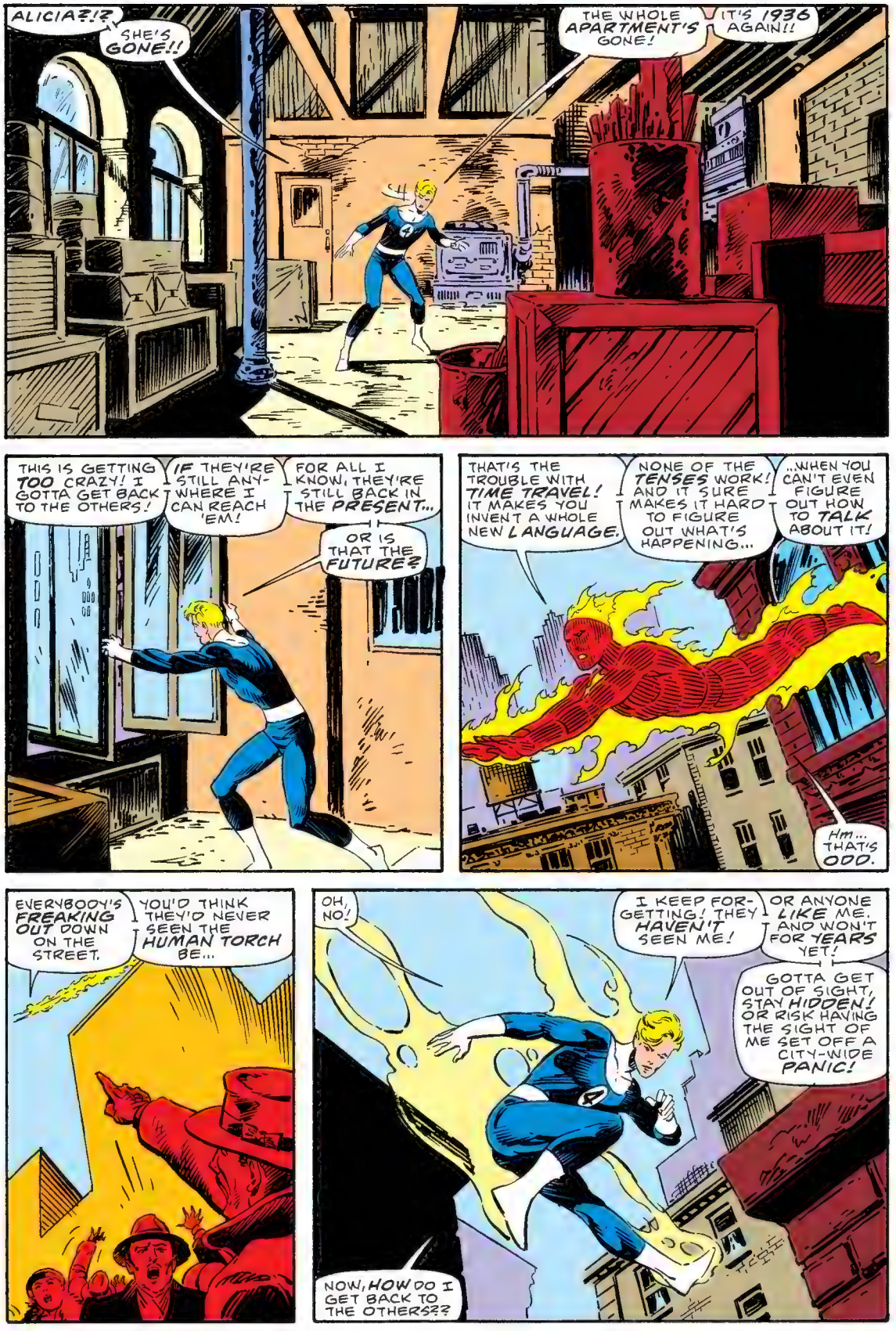

OKAY, SO WE'VE GOT OURSELVES AN INCONSPICUOUS WAY OF GETTING AROUND TOWN.
THAT STILL LEAVES US WITH THE QUESTION OF WHERE TO GO?
GOOD QUESTION, JOHNNY. ANY THOUGHTS, SUZIE?
NOTHING TERRIBLY HELPFUL, NICK.
AT THIS PARTICULAR POINT IN EARTH'S HISTORY, THERE WERE NO KNOWN SUPER-BEINGS AROUND.
THAT'S TRUE. CAPTAIN AMERICA AN' THE HUMAN TORCH-- THE ORIGINAL HUMAN TORCH-- DON'T EVEN EXIST YET.
AND SOMEHOW I DON'T THINK S.H.I.E.L.D.'S GRANDDADDY ORGANIZATION'D KNOW WHAT TA DO FOR-- OR ABOUT US.
BUT...YA KNOW, THIS BEIN' 1936 AN' ALL, I KEEP THINKING WE SHOULD FIND A WAY TA ZIP OVER TA GERMANY AN' KNOCK OFF A CERTAIN LITTLE PAPER-HANGER BEFORE HE...
OHH... SPIT!
WEEOOE
TH' COPS!

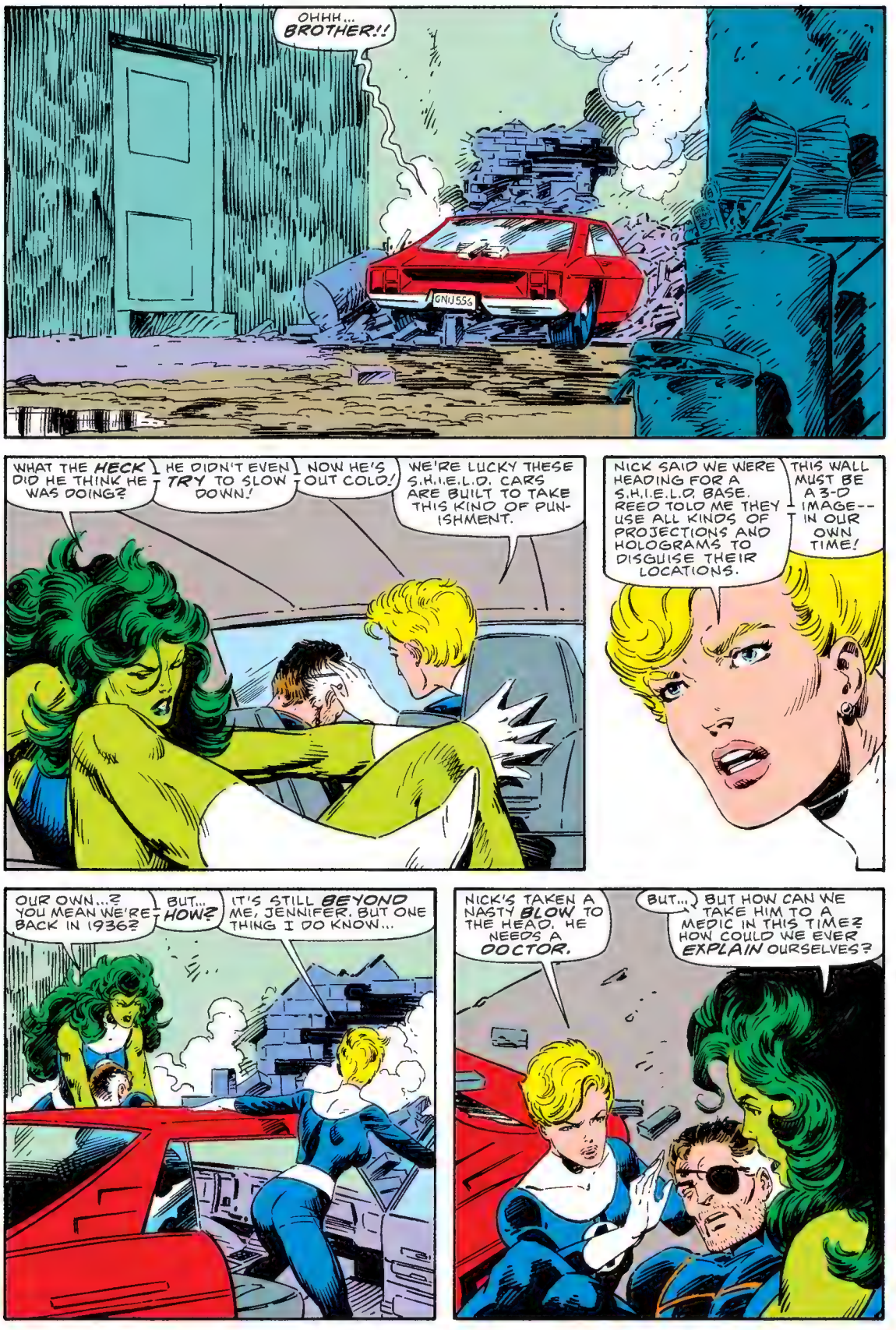

NICK, WHAT HAPPENED? HOW DID THEY SPOT US?
EEOOOEEU
MUSTA BEEN TH' LICENSE PLATE! I WUZ HOPIN' NOBODY'D PAY ENUFF ATTENTION TA NOTICE TH' DATE'S FIFTY YEARS OFF!
HANG ON!
GNU 556
SKREEE
CAREFUL, NICK! CAREFUL! IF WE HAVE ANY KIND OF ACCIDENT...
UPS
I KNOW, I KNOW! HISTORY GOES KA-BLOOEY! BUT DON'T WORRY YET.
WE LOOK LIKE A TRUCK, BUT WE STILL HANDLE LIKE A CAR...
...AND WE CAN GO PLACES ONLY A CAR CAN!!

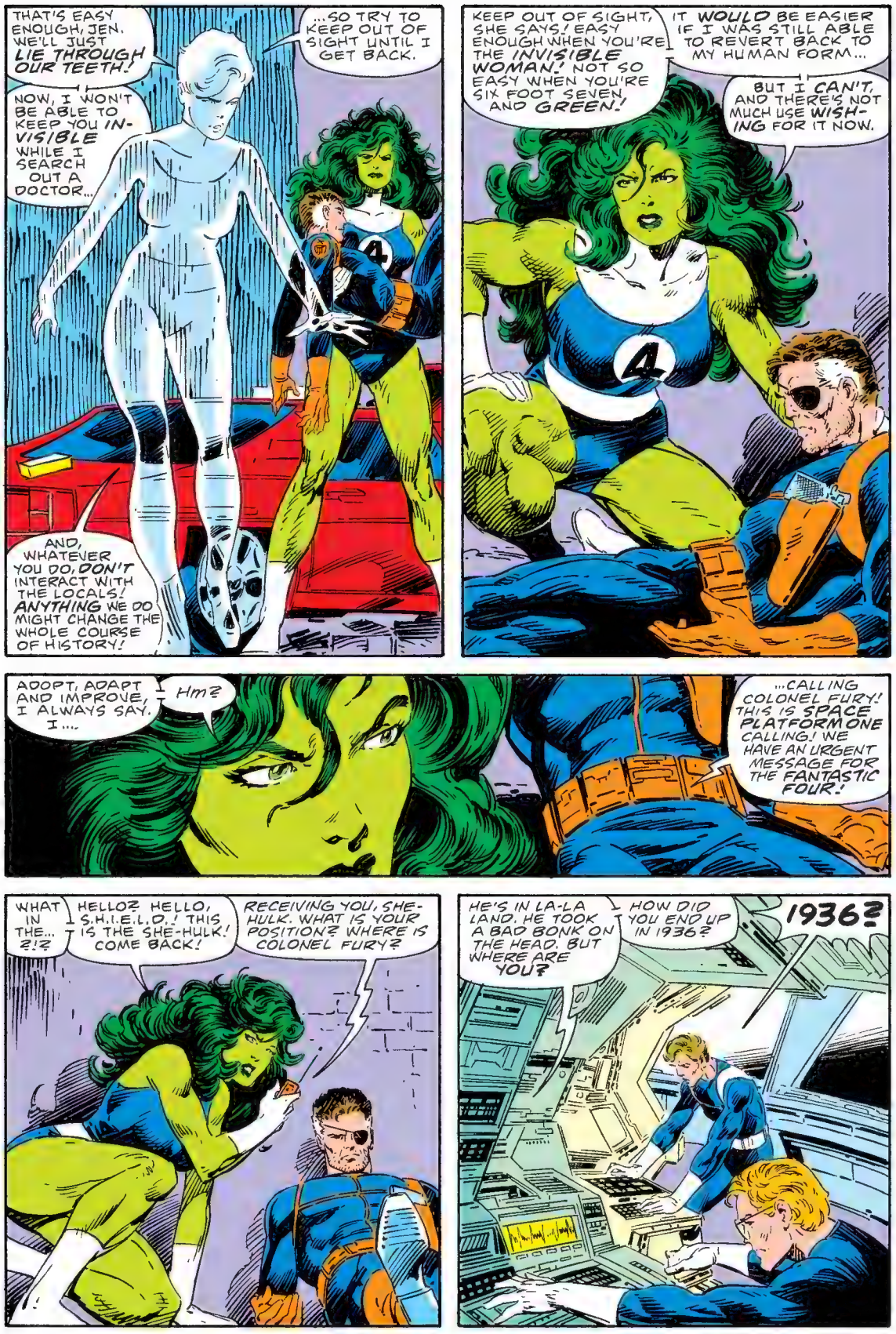
HA! THAT SHOOK 'EM! AN' IT'LL TAKE A WHILE FOR THEM TA CALL IN TA THEIR STATION HOUSE.
ENOUGH TIME FER US TA...
!??
WHAT IN TH' NAME O'...
???
WE'RE BACK IN TH' PRESENT!!
ONE WAY
NO COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC

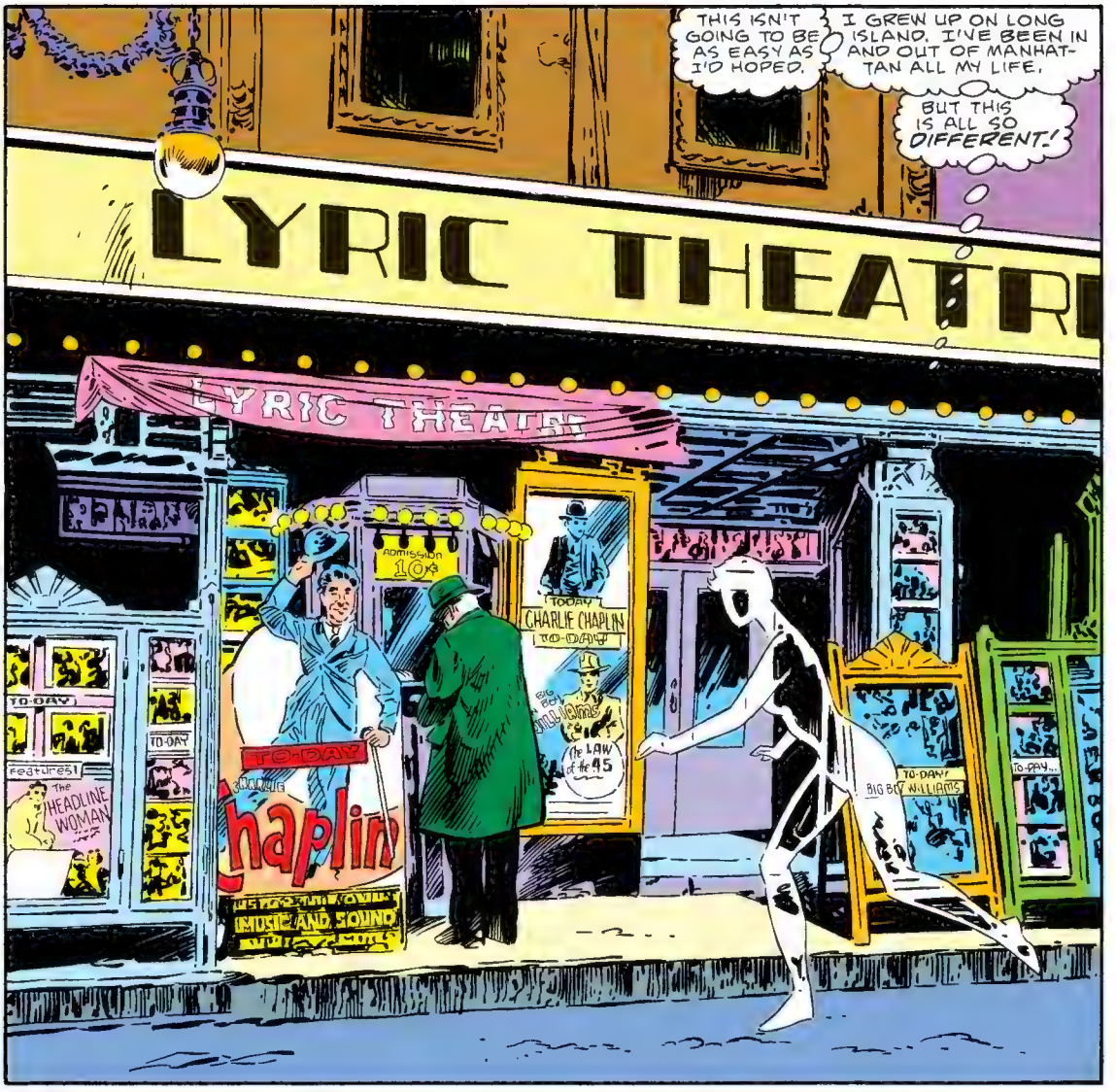
BUT... HOW? I WASN'T AWARE OF ANY KIND OF TRANSITION, OF PASSING ACROSS A BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE TIMES...
ME NEITHER, SUZIE. AN' I AIN'T GONNA WASTE ANY TIME THINKIN' ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW! THERE'S A S.H.I.E.L.D. BASE A COUPLE O' BLOCKS FROM HERE.
THEY CAN FIGGER IT OUT.
NOT SO FAST, FURY!
IF WE'RE BACK IN OUR OWN TIME, I'M OUTTA HERE!
'SCUSE ME, SHULKIE!
WHAT'S THE :Unff: RUSH, JOHNNY?
U.P.S.
ALICIA! I GOTTA FIND OUT IF SHE'S OKAY! SHE WAS ALL BY HERSELF WHEN THE TIME-WARP HAPPENED.
FLAME ON!
SHE'S GOTTA BE OKAY. SHE'S JUST GOTTA!
BUT AS SELF-SUFFICIENT AS ALICIA IS, I CAN NEVER LET MYSELF FORGET SHE'S BLIND.
AND THAT MAKES HER EXTRA VULNERABLE TO THE KINDS OF WEIRDNESS THE FF IS ALWAYS SMUSHING INTO.

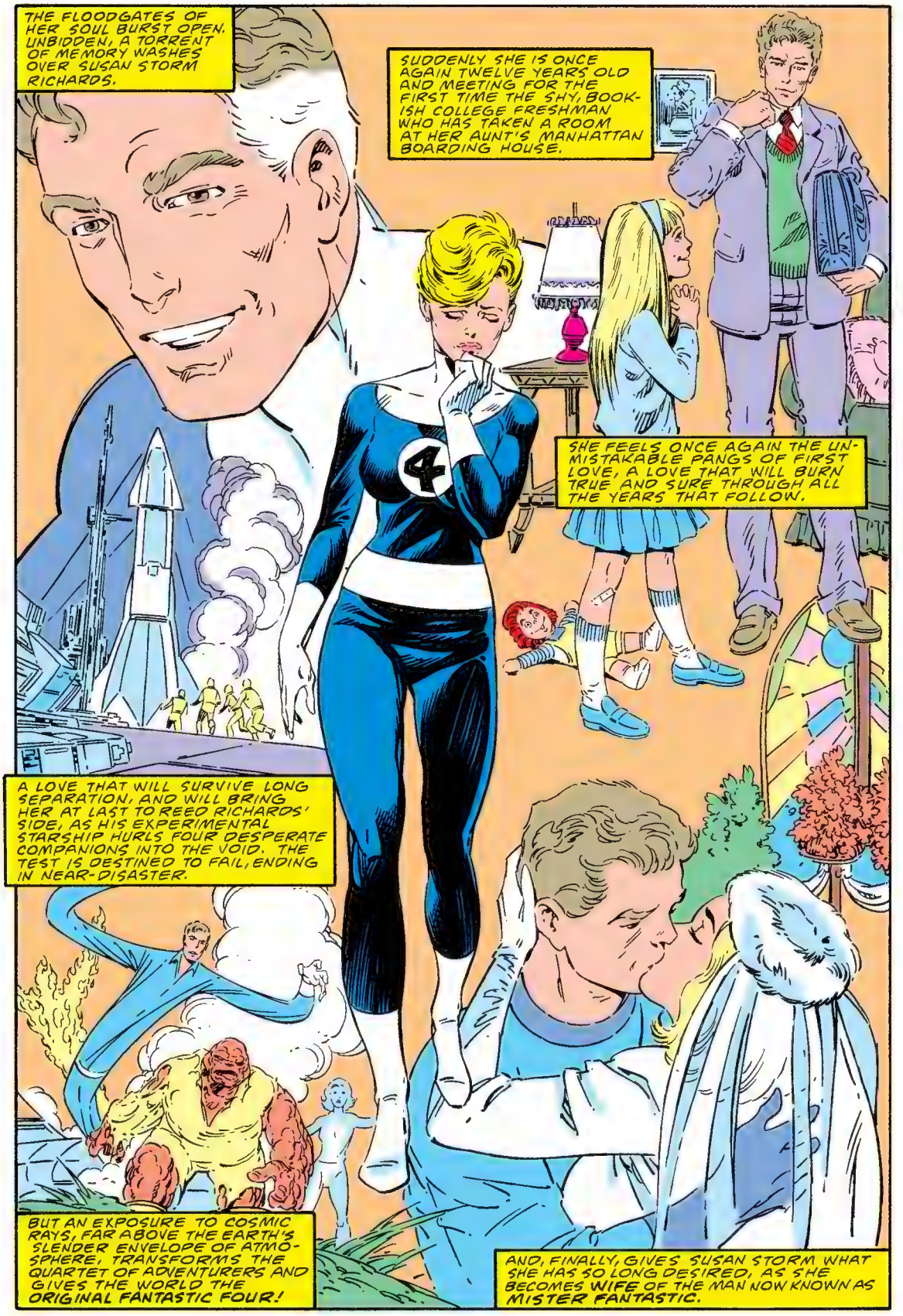

ALICIA!!
BABY! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!
JOHNNY...? WHAT'S WRONG, DARLING? WHY SHOULDN'T I BE ALL RIGHT?
SAVE THE QUESTIONS FOR A SEC, BABE! I'VE NEVER BEEN SO GLAD TO SEE ANY-ONE IN MY LIFE!
BUT... WHAT GIVES, ALICIA? WHY AREN'T YOU DISTURBED BY THIS SCREWY TIME MIX-UP?
TIME MIX-UP?
JOHNNY, WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN? AND WHY ARE YOU SO UPSET? IT HASN'T BEEN MORE THAN THREE HOURS SINCE WE LAST SAW EACH OTHER.
THREE...? MY GOSH, CAN IT BE? THE WHOLE ADVENTURE IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE, REED'S DEATH, THIS TIME WARPING...
ALL IN THREE HOURS...?
REED'S DEATH? JOHNNY, WHAT DO YOU --

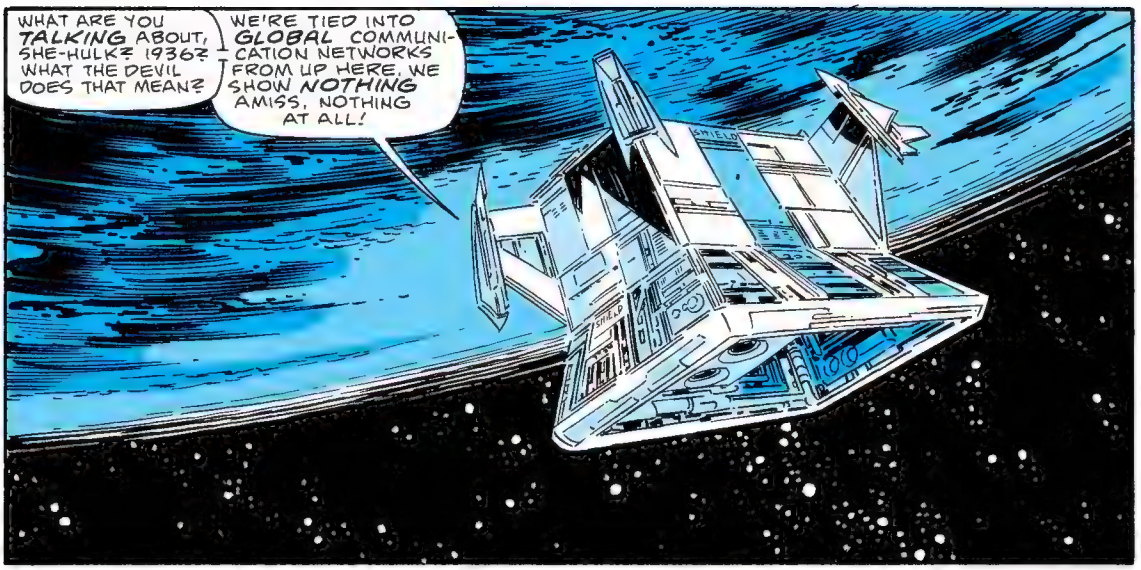

ALICIA?!?
SHE'S GONE!!
THE WHOLE APARTMENT'S GONE!
IT'S 1936 AGAIN!!
THIS IS GETTING TOO CRAZY! I GOTTA GET BACK TO THE OTHERS!
IF THEY'RE STILL ANYWHERE I CAN REACH 'EM!
FOR ALL I KNOW, THEY'RE STILL BACK IN THE PRESENT...
OR IS THAT THE FUTURE?
THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH TIME TRAVEL! IT MAKES YOU INVENT A WHOLE NEW LANGUAGE.
NONE OF THE TENSES WORK! AND IT SURE MAKES IT HARD TO FIGURE OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING...
...WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN FIGURE OUT HOW TO TALK ABOUT IT!
HM... THAT'S ODD.
EVERYBODY'S FREAKING OUT DOWN ON THE STREET.
YOU'D THINK THEY'D NEVER SEEN THE HUMAN TORCH BE...
OH, NO!
I KEEP FORGETTING! THEY HAVEN'T SEEN ME!
OR ANYONE LIKE ME. AND WON'T FOR YEARS YET!
GOTTA GET OUT OF SIGHT, STAY HIDDEN! OR RISK HAVING THE SIGHT OF ME SET OFF A CITY-WIDE PANIC!
NOW, HOW DO I GET BACK TO THE OTHERS??

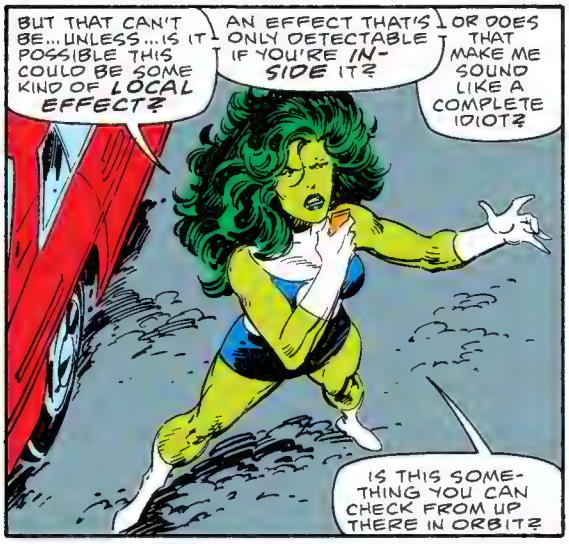

OHHH... BROTHER!!
GNU 553
WHAT THE HECK DID HE THINK HE WAS DOING?
HE DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO SLOW DOWN!
NOW HE'S OUT COLD!
WE'RE LUCKY THESE S.H.I.E.L.D. CARS ARE BUILT TO TAKE THIS KIND OF PUNISHMENT.
NICK SAID WE WERE HEADING FOR A S.H.I.E.L.D. BASE. REED TOLD ME THEY USE ALL KINDS OF PROJECTIONS AND HOLOGRAMS TO DISGUISE THEIR LOCATIONS.
THIS WALL MUST BE A 3-D IMAGE-- IN OUR OWN TIME!
OUR OWN...? YOU MEAN WE'RE BACK IN 1936?
BUT... HOW?
IT'S STILL BEYOND ME, JENNIFER. BUT ONE THING I DO KNOW...
NICK'S TAKEN A NASTY BLOW TO THE HEAD. HE NEEDS A DOCTOR.
BUT...
BUT HOW CAN WE TAKE HIM TO A MEDIC IN THIS TIME? HOW COULD WE EVER EXPLAIN OURSELVES?

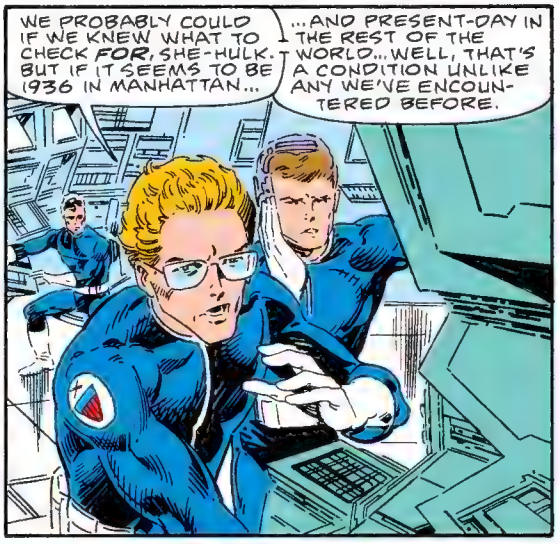

THAT'S EASY ENOUGH, JEN. WE'LL JUST LIE THROUGH OUR TEETH!
...SO TRY TO KEEP OUT OF SIGHT UNTIL I GET BACK.
NOW, I WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP YOU IN-VISIBLE WHILE I SEARCH OUT A DOCTOR...
AND, WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T INTERACT WITH THE LOCALS! ANYTHING WE DO MIGHT CHANGE THE WHOLE COURSE OF HISTORY!
KEEP OUT OF SIGHT, SHE SAYS! EASY ENOUGH WHEN YOU'RE THE INVISIBLE WOMAN! NOT SO EASY WHEN YOU'RE SIX FOOT SEVEN AND GREEN!
IT WOULD BE EASIER IF I WAS STILL ABLE TO REVERT BACK TO MY HUMAN FORM...
BUT I CAN'T, AND THERE'S NOT MUCH USE WISH-ING FOR IT NOW.
ADOPT, ADAPT AND IMPROVE, I ALWAYS SAY. I....
Hm?
...CALLING COLONEL FURY! THIS IS SPACE PLATFORM ONE CALLING! WE HAVE AN URGENT MESSAGE FOR THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
WHAT IN THE... ?!?
HELLO? HELLO, S.H.I.E.L.D.! THIS IS THE SHE-HULK! COME BACK!
RECEIVING YOU, SHE-HULK. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION? WHERE IS COLONEL FURY?
HE'S IN LA-LA LAND. HE TOOK A BAD BONK ON THE HEAD. BUT WHERE ARE YOU?
HOW DID YOU END UP IN 1936?
1936?

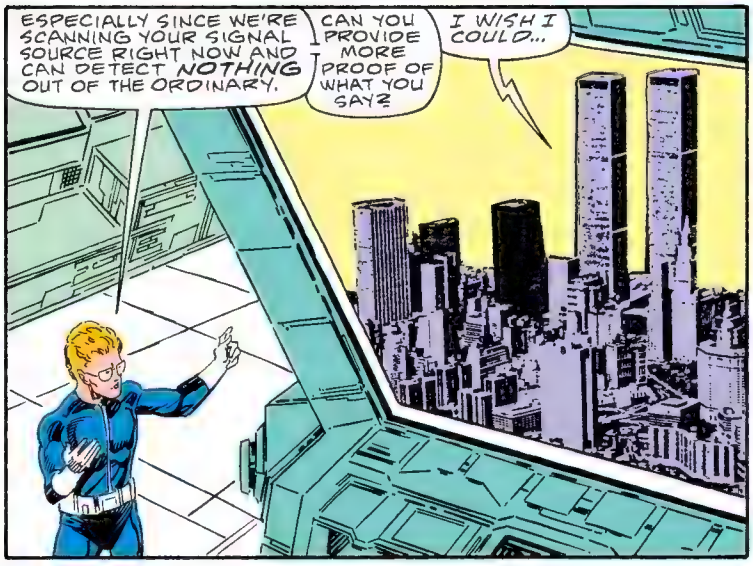

THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE AS EASY AS I'D HOPED.
I GREW UP ON LONG ISLAND. I'VE BEEN IN AND OUT OF MANHATTAN ALL MY LIFE.
BUT THIS IS ALL SO DIFFERENT!
LYRIC THEATRE
LYRIC THEATRE
ADMISSION 10¢
TODAY CHARLIE CHAPLIN TO-DAY
TO-DAY
TO-DAY


THE FLOODGATES OF HER SOUL BURST OPEN. UNBIDDEN, A TORRENT OF MEMORY WASHES OVER SUSAN STORM RICHARDS.
SUDDENLY SHE IS ONCE AGAIN TWELVE YEARS OLD AND MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME THE SHY, BOOKISH COLLEGE FRESHMAN WHO HAS TAKEN A ROOM AT HER AUNT'S MANHATTAN BOARDING HOUSE.
SHE FEELS ONCE AGAIN THE UNMISTAKABLE PANGS OF FIRST LOVE, A LOVE THAT WILL BURN TRUE AND SURE THROUGH ALL THE YEARS THAT FOLLOW.
A LOVE THAT WILL SURVIVE LONG SEPARATION, AND WILL BRING HER AT LAST TO REED RICHARDS' SIDE, AS HIS EXPERIMENTAL STARSHIP HURLS FOUR DESPERATE COMPANIONS INTO THE VOID. THE TEST IS DESTINED TO FAIL, ENDING IN NEAR-DISASTER.
BUT AN EXPOSURE TO COSMIC RAYS, FAR ABOVE THE EARTH'S SLENDER ENVELOPE OF ATMOSPHERE, TRANSFORMS THE QUARTET OF ADVENTURERS AND GIVES THE WORLD THE ORIGINAL FANTASTIC FOUR!
AND, FINALLY, GIVES SUSAN STORM WHAT SHE HAS SO LONG DESIRED, AS SHE BECOMES WIFE OF THE MAN NOW KNOWN AS MISTER FANTASTIC.


WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SHE-HULK? 1936? WHAT THE DEVIL DOES THAT MEAN?
WE'RE TIED INTO GLOBAL COMMUNICATION NETWORKS FROM UP HERE. WE SHOW NOTHING AMISS, NOTHING AT ALL!


BUT THAT CAN'T BE... UNLESS... IS IT POSSIBLE THIS COULD BE SOME KIND OF LOCAL EFFECT?
AN EFFECT THAT'S ONLY DETECTABLE IF YOU'RE INSIDE IT?
OR DOES THAT MAKE ME SOUND LIKE A COMPLETE IDIOT?
IS THIS SOMETHING YOU CAN CHECK FROM UP THERE IN ORBIT?


WE PROBABLY COULD IF WE KNEW WHAT TO CHECK FOR, SHE-HULK. BUT IF IT SEEMS TO BE 1936 IN MANHATTAN...
...AND PRESENT-DAY IN THE REST OF THE WORLD... WELL, THAT'S A CONDITION UNLIKE ANY WE'VE ENCOUNTERED BEFORE.


ESPECIALLY SINCE WE'RE SCANNING YOUR SIGNAL SOURCE RIGHT NOW AND CAN DETECT NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY.
CAN YOU PROVIDE MORE PROOF OF WHAT YOU SAY?
I WISH I COULD...

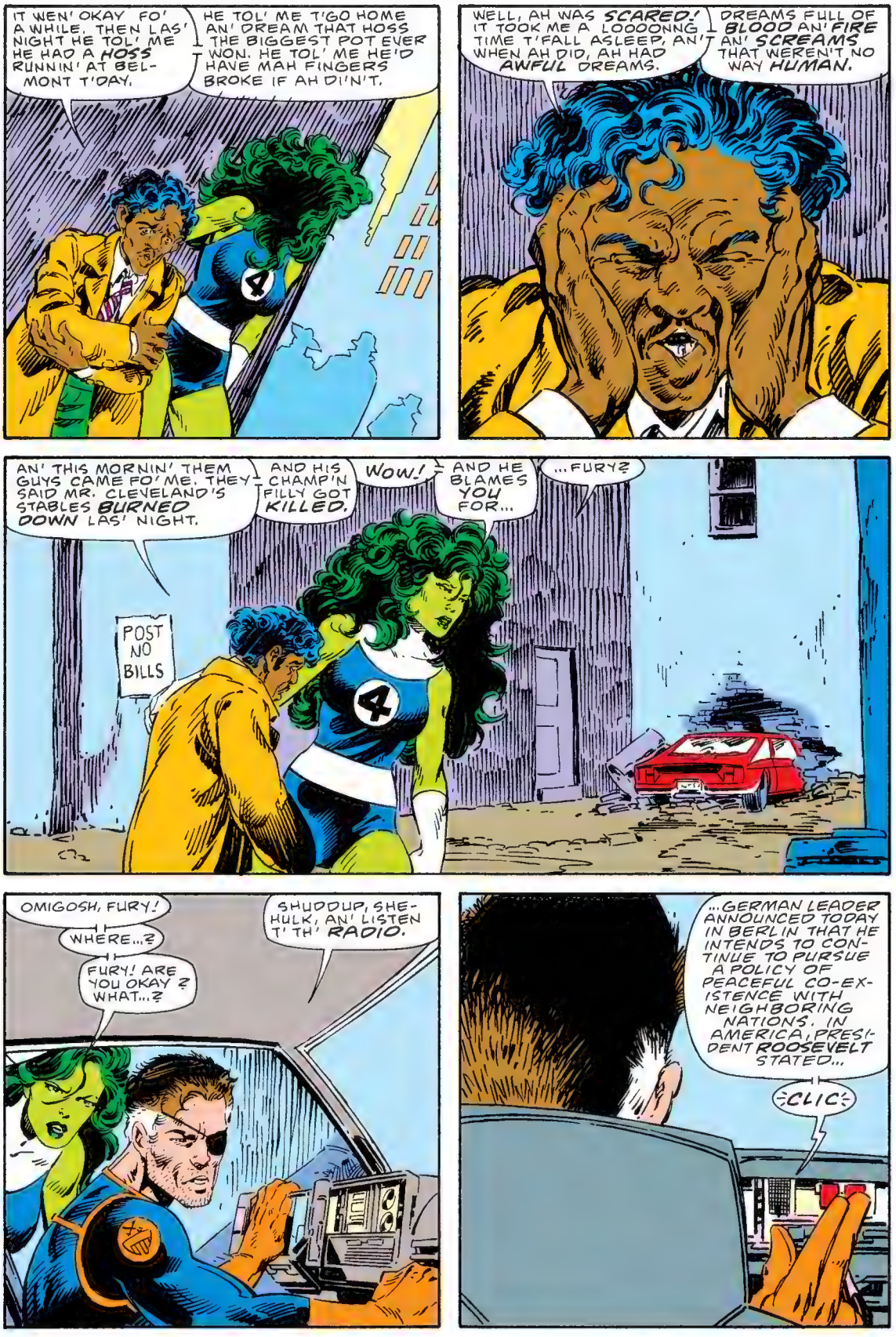
BUT I'M NO SCIENTIST. I HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST IDEA WHAT--
HELP!
WHAT...?

HANG AROUND A MINUTE, YOU GUYS.
THERE'S SOMETHING GOING DOWN...
A CAR FULL OF HOODS? CHASING THAT ONE GUY?
THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH OF A FAIR MATCH. MAYBE I SHOULD...
BUT NO... SUE SAID NOT TO GET INVOLVED. NOT TO INTERACT WITH THE LOCALS.
H-187
"AND YET... HOW CAN I JUST STAND BY AND WATCH?
"HOW CAN I JUST LET 'EM RUN HIM DOWN?
"SURE, ALL THIS WAS OVER AND DONE WITH HALF A CENTURY AGO...
"... BUT DOES THAT MAKE ME ANY LESS RESPONSIBLE?"

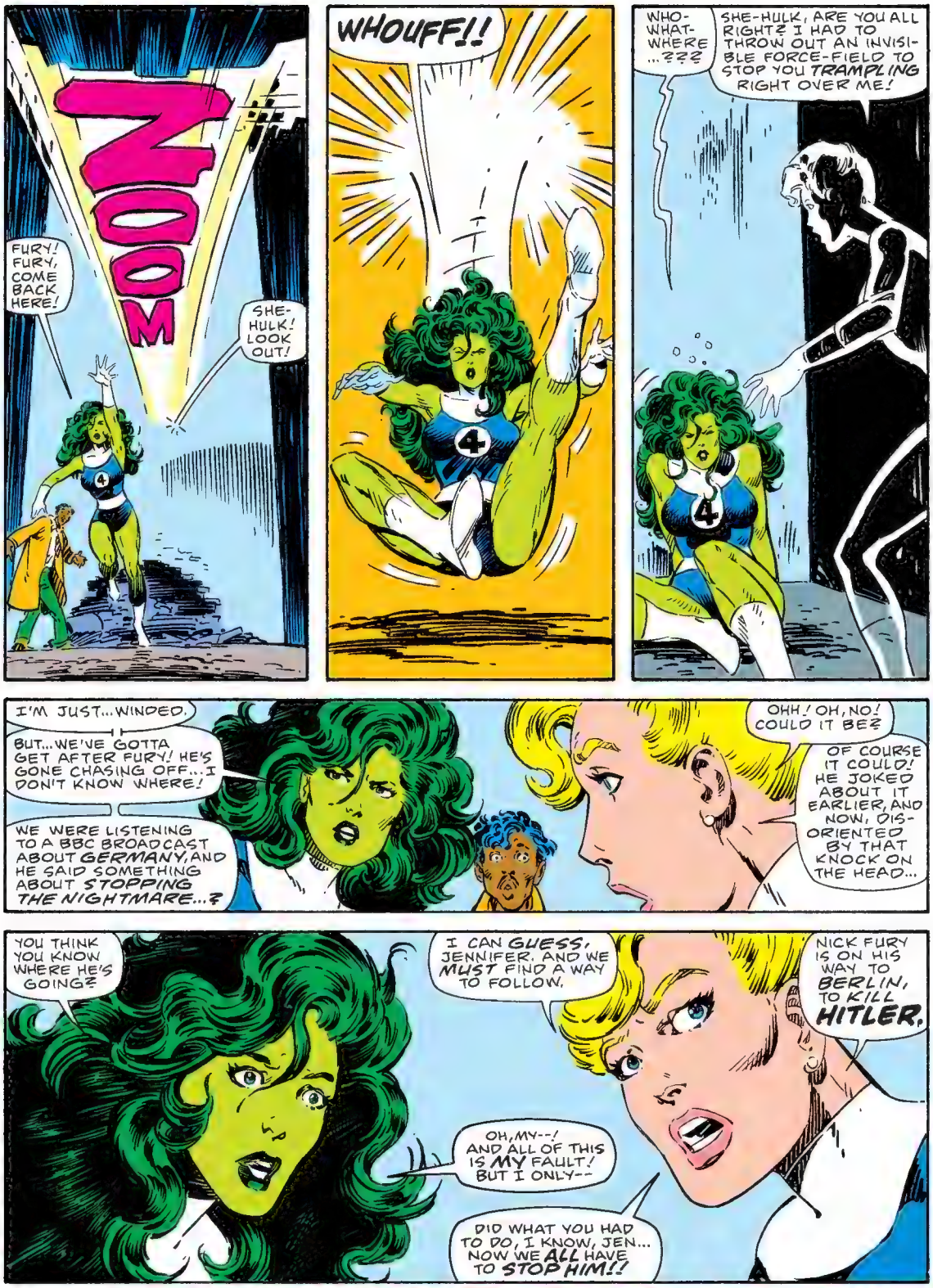
NOW AH LAYS ME DOWN T'SLEEP...
...AH PRAYS TH' LORD MAH SOUL T' KEEP.
IF AH SHOULD DIE...
??
...HOLEEE...!!
HI THERE.
NEED A LITTLE HELP?

SEE? SEE? I TOLDJA THAT BOY'S A WITCH!!
WH-WHAT IS THAT? A DAME?
AIN'T NO DAME! IT'S SOME KINDA MARTIAN!
IT'S A DEVIL! A DEVIL!!
AN' THAT DARKIE CALLED IT UP! CALLED IT UP FROM HADES!
WELL, WELL. I'VE BEEN CALLED SOME UNFLATTERING THINGS IN MY DAY...
...BUT "MARTIAN" AND "DEVIL" ARE A NEW LOW.
YOU OKAY, MISTER?
MISTER...?
DON'T HURT ME! P-PLEASE DON'T HURT ME! AH AIN'T DONE NOTHIN'! AH SWEARS AH AIN'T!
HEY, TAKE IT EASY, PAL. I JUST RODE TO YOUR RESCUE, REMEMBER?
NOW, TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND RELAX. WHO WERE THOSE GUYS? WHY WERE THEY AFTER YOU?
WHO ARE YOU, FOR THAT MATTER?

NAME'S "LICORICE" CALHOUN. THEM GUYS IS MUSCLE FROM TH' FLAMINGO CLUB. AH BLOWS CLARINET FOR "SWEET" TOMMY CONNORS' BAND.
CONNORS? SURE... MY DAD USED TO LISTEN TO A LOT OF JAZZ RECORDS WHEN I WAS A KID. I REMEMBER "SWEET" TOMMY CONNORS.
BUT HOW DOES SOMEBODY WHO BLOWS A "LICORICE STICK" FOR A JAZZ BAND GET INTO TROUBLE WITH GOONS LIKE THAT?
YOU GET CAUGHT WITH YOUR BOSS'S LADY-LOVE OR SOMETHING?
N-NO, MA'AM! OL' "LICORICE," HE DON'T MESS WITH NOBODY ELSE'S LADY! IT'S MAH DREAMIN'!
MY OL' MAMMY ALWAYS SAID IT'D GET ME IN TROUBLE ONE DAY!
DREAMING?? YOU MEAN THEY WERE GOING TO SQUASH YOU LIKE A BUG FOR SLEEPING ON THE JOB?
NOT ON THE JOB, MA'AM. SEE, SOMETIMES AH HAS THESE DREAMS. THEY'S REAL CLEAR AN' REAL LIKE. AN' AFTER AH HAS 'EM...
...THEY ALWAYS COME TRUE.'
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
NO, MA'AM! AH WOULDN'T KID 'BOUT SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT! I JUST THINK 'BOUT SOMETHIN' AH WANT T' HAPPEN...
AN' SOMETIMES THAT MAKES ME DREAM ABOUT IT. AN' IF I DREAM ABOUT IT, IT ALWAYS HAPPENS. MAH DREAMS MAKE IT HAPPEN.
WE COULON'T BE TALKING CO-INCIDENCE HERE, COULD WE?
NO, MA'AM!
AN' ANYWAY, MISTER CLEVELAND, WHAT OWNS TH' FLAMINGO, HE FOUND OUT 'BOUT MAH DREAMS, AN' WANTED T' USE THEM WANTED ME T' DREAM THINGS FOR HIM.


IT WEN' OKAY FO' A WHILE. THEN LAS' NIGHT HE TOL' ME HE HAD A HOSS RUNNIN' AT BEL-MONT T'DAY.
HE TOL' ME T'GO HOME AN' DREAM THAT HOSS THE BIGGEST POT EVER WON. HE TOL' ME HE'D HAVE MAH FINGERS BROKE IF AH DI'N'T.
WELL, AH WAS SCARED! IT TOOK ME A LOOOONNG TIME T'FALL ASLEEP, AN' WHEN AH DID, AH HAD AWFUL DREAMS.
DREAMS FULL OF BLOOD AN' FIRE AN' SCREAMS THAT WEREN'T NO WAY HUMAN.
AN' THIS MORNIN' THEM GUYS CAME FO' ME. THEY SAID MR. CLEVELAND'S STABLES BURNED DOWN LAS' NIGHT.
AND HIS CHAMP'N FILLY GOT KILLED.
WOW!
AND HE BLAMES YOU FOR...
...FURY?
POST NO BILLS
OMIGOSH, FURY!
WHERE...?
FURY! ARE YOU OKAY? WHAT...?
SHUDDUP, SHE-HULK, AN' LISTEN T' TH' RADIO.
...GERMAN LEADER ANNOUNCED TODAY IN BERLIN THAT HE INTENDS TO CONTINUE TO PURSUE A POLICY OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE WITH NEIGHBORING NATIONS. IN AMERICA, PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT STATED...
-CLIC-

?
I DON'T GET IT. WHEN DID ANY NEW YORK RADIO STATION EVER USE AN ANNOUNCER WITH SUCH A HEAVY BRITISH ACCENT?
THEY NEVER DID, SHE-HULK. THAT WUZ TH' B.B.C. HOME SERVICE, BROADCASTIN' LIVE FROM LONDON, ENGLAND.
WHAT?!?
BUT... THIS ISN'T POSSI-BLE! NEW YORK IS THE ONLY PLACE AFFECTED BY THIS TIME-SHIFTING!
NOT NO MORE IT AIN'T.
SEE, I WUZN'T TOTALLY ZONKED WHEN YOU WUZ TALKIN' T' MY BOYS UP ON SPA-ONE.
I HEARD WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT THE REST OF THE WORLD BEIN' UNAFFECTED, AN' AFTER YOU RUN OFF I CALLED 'EM UP ON TH' CAR RADIO.
ONLY ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY WEREN'T THERE.
SO I FLIPPED ON THE LONG-RANGE IONOSPHERIC MONITOR, AN' STARTED PULLIN' IN CHANNELS FROM ALL OVER TH' WORLD.
AN' ALL OVER TH' WORLD IT'S 1936!
BUT... BUT...
HOW?! ?!?
I DUNNO, GREENIE. BUT I KNOW SOMETHING.
SHREEEEE
THE NIGHTMARE IS BEGINNIN' ALL OVER AGAIN...
AN' IT'S UP TA ME TA STOP IT!
FURY!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!!?!


BOOM
FURY! FURY, COME BACK HERE!
SHE-HULK! LOOK OUT!
WHOUFF!!
WHO-WHAT-WHERE ...???
SHE-HULK, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? I HAD TO THROW OUT AN INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD TO STOP YOU TRAMPLING RIGHT OVER ME!
I'M JUST...WINDED.
BUT...WE'VE GOTTA GET AFTER FURY! HE'S GONE CHASING OFF...I DON'T KNOW WHERE!
WE WERE LISTENING TO A BBC BROADCAST ABOUT GERMANY, AND HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT STOPPING THE NIGHTMARE...?
OHH! OH, NO! COULD IT BE?
OF COURSE IT COULD! HE JOKED ABOUT IT EARLIER, AND NOW, DISORIENTED BY THAT KNOCK ON THE HEAD...
YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHERE HE'S GOING?
I CAN GUESS, JENNIFER, AND WE MUST FIND A WAY TO FOLLOW.
NICK FURY IS ON HIS WAY TO BERLIN, TO KILL HITLER.
OH, MY--! AND ALL OF THIS IS MY FAULT! BUT I ONLY--
DID WHAT YOU HAD TO DO, I KNOW, JEN... NOW WE ALL HAVE TO STOP HIM!!

NEXT ISSUE:

TWISTS AND TURNS AND SURPRISES GALORE AS THE FF TRY TO COME TO TERMS WITH...

THE MAN WHO DREAMED THE WORLD!

ON SALE IN THIRTY DAYS!!!

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
Fantastic Four
MARVEL
25TH
ANNIVERSARY
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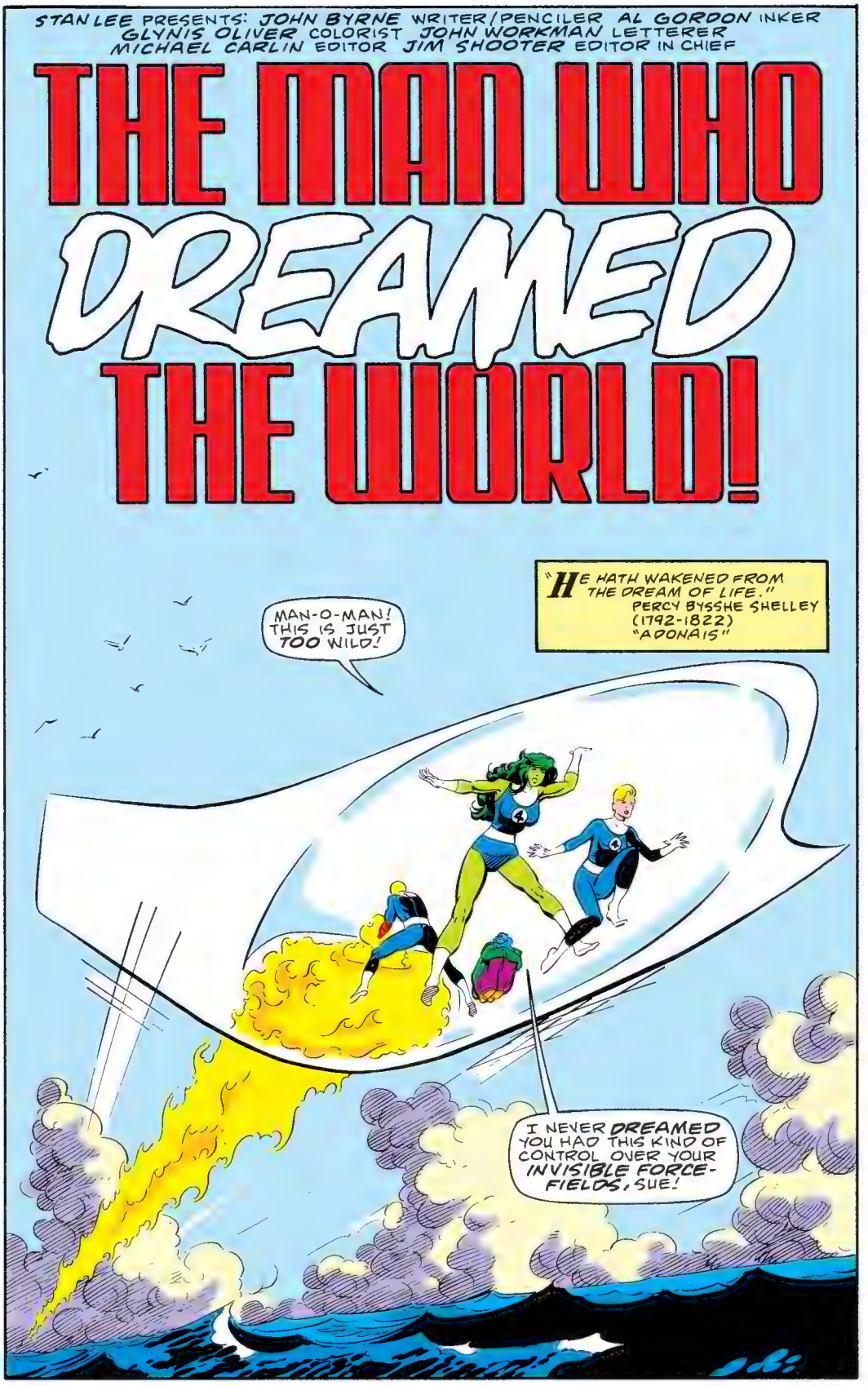
TM
75¢
292
JULY
02462
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NICK FURY IS GOING TO KILL ADOLF HITLER!
AND WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!!
OR DO WE?
BYRNE

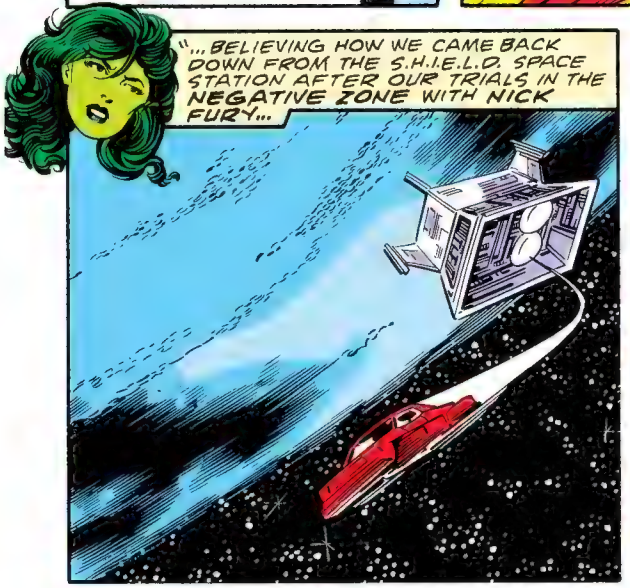

STAN LEE PRESENTS: JOHN BYRNE WRITER/PENCILER AL GORDON INKER
GLYNIS OLIVER COLORIST JOHN WORKMAN LETTERER
MICHAEL CARLIN EDITOR JIM SHOOTER EDITOR IN CHIEF
THE MAN WHO DREAMED THE WORLD!
"HE HATH WAKENED FROM THE DREAM OF LIFE."
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
(1792-1822)
"ADONAIS"
MAN-O-MAN! THIS IS JUST TOO WILD!
I NEVER DREAMED YOU HAD THIS KIND OF CONTROL OVER YOUR INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELDS, SUE!

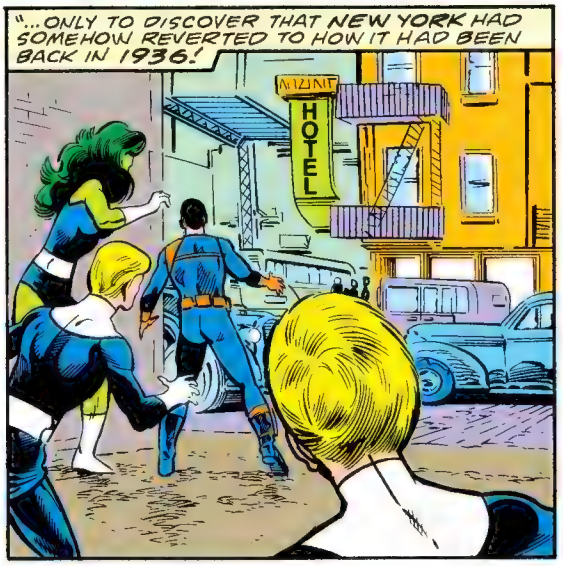
I MEAN, I KNOW YOU CAN USE THEM TO CREATE NEARLY INDESTRUCTIBLE BARRIERS, AND EVEN SIMPLE METHODS OF TRANSPORTATION...
...BUT FORMING A JET PLANE, USING THE HUMAN TORCH'S POWER FOR THRUST...!
IT'S A VARIATION ON SOMETHING REED AND I WERE WORKING ON BEFORE... BEFORE HE WAS KILLED, SHE-HULK.
AFTER WE USED ONE OF MY FIELDS TO GLIDE DOWN FROM ORBIT* REED FELT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO UTILIZE THEM EVEN MORE EFFICIENTLY.
BUT WE'D ONLY JUST STARTED EXPERIMENTING WITH THE POSSIBILITIES...
* IN FANTASTIC FOUR #279

BUT...EVEN SO...YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT, JENNIFER. ORDINARILY, I WOULD THINK THIS KIND OF CONTROL BEYOND THE SCOPE OF MY ABILITIES AS THE INVISIBLE WOMAN.

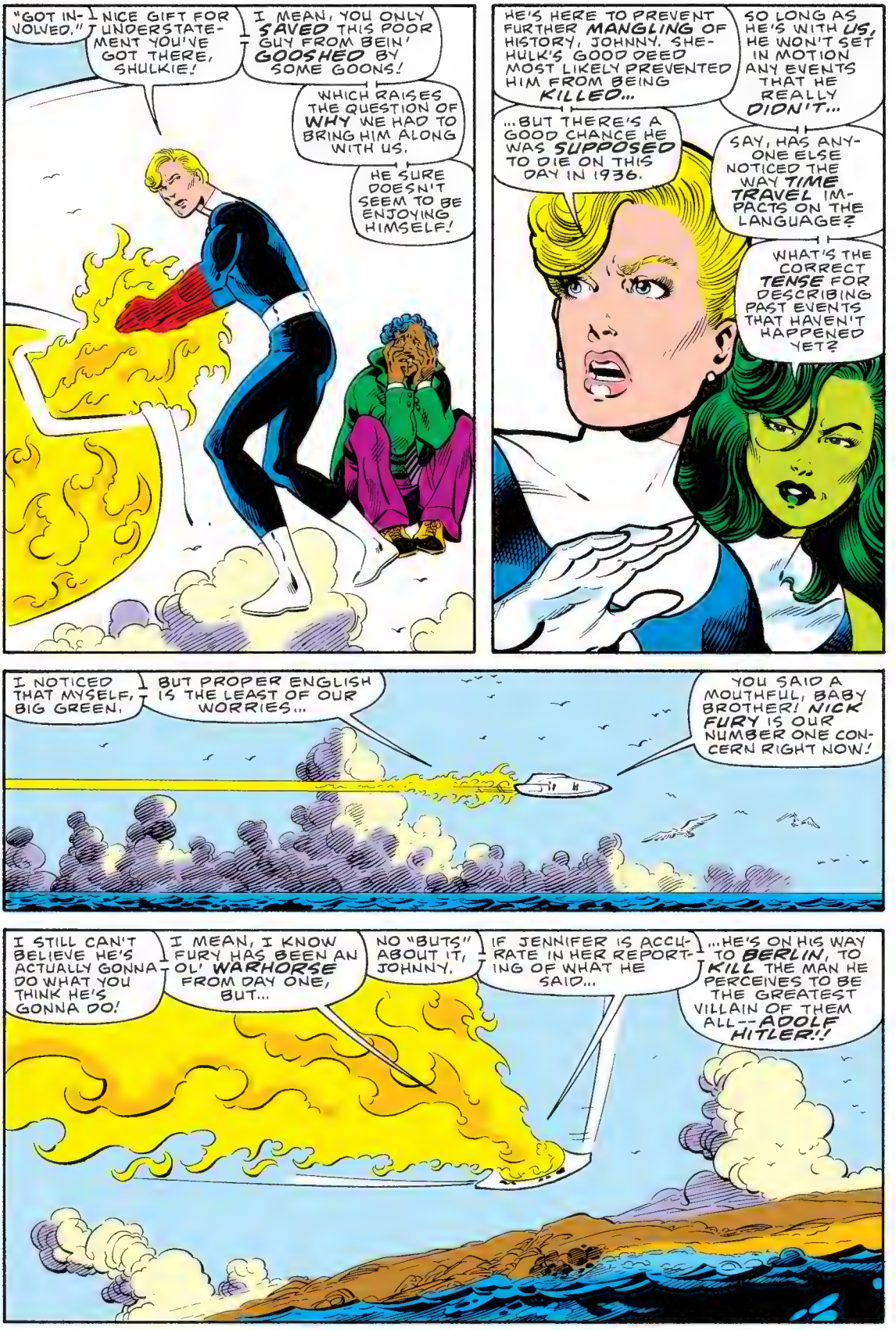
"ORDINARILY" IS PROBABLY THE KEY WORD THERE, SIS.
THERE'S NOTHING "ORDINARY" ABOUT OUR CURRENT SITUATION.

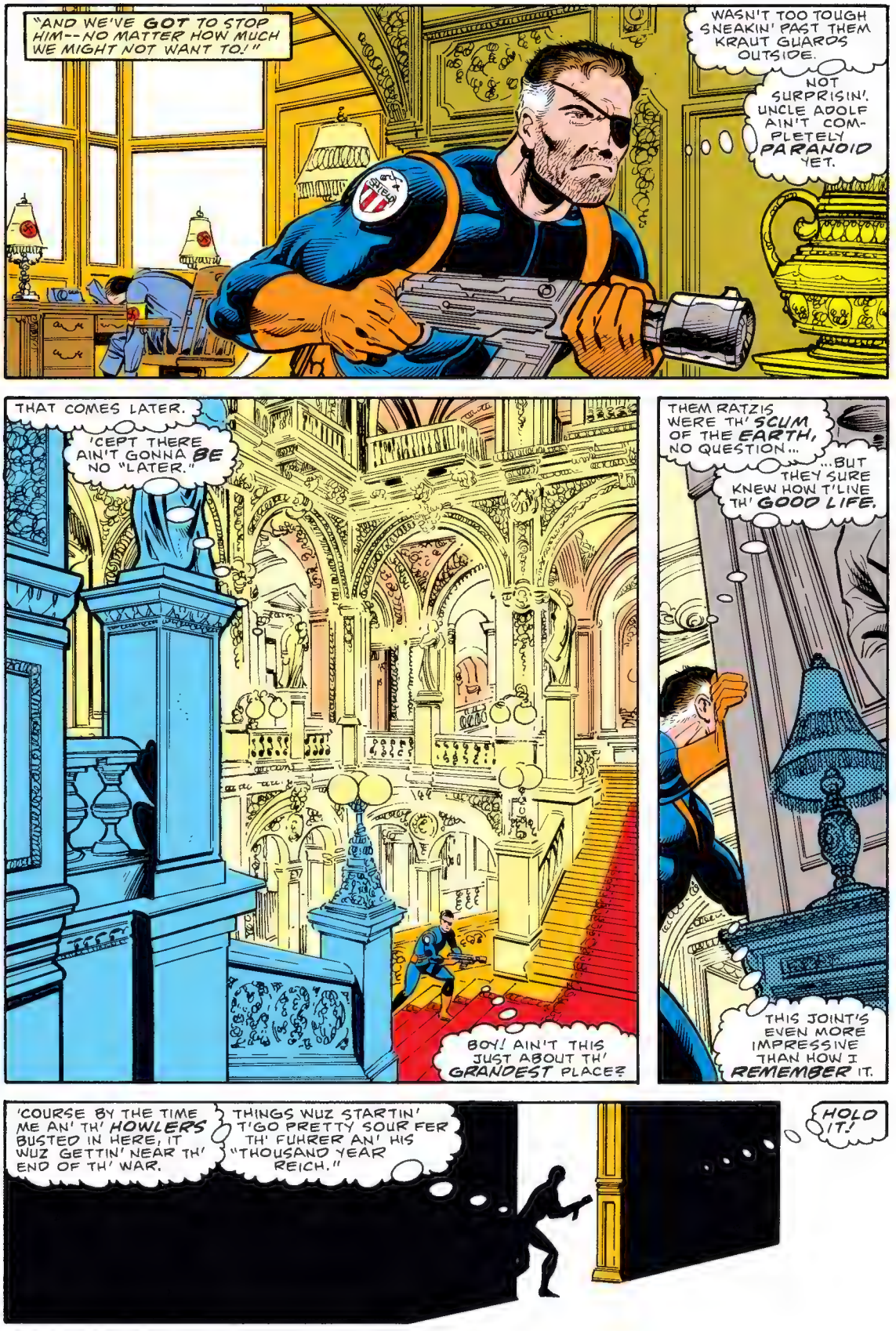
THAT'S ONLY TOO TRUE, TORCHIE.
I'M STILL HAVING TROUBLE BELIEVING THE PAST FEW HOURS.

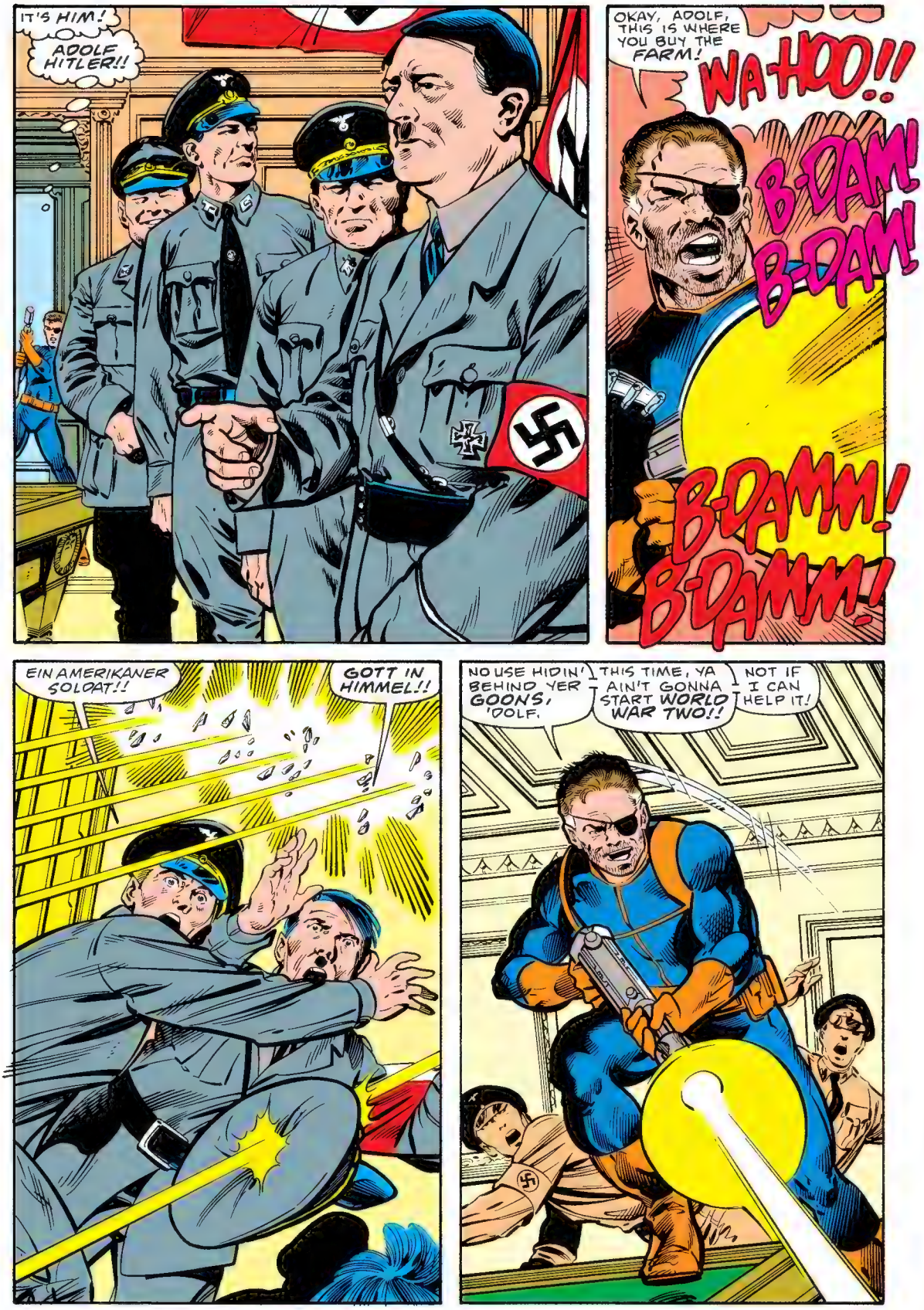

"...BELIEVING HOW WE CAME BACK DOWN FROM THE S.H.I.E.L.D. SPACE STATION AFTER OUR TRIALS IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE WITH NICK FURY...


"...ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT NEW YORK HAD SOMEHOW REVERTED TO HOW IT HAD BEEN BACK IN 1936!
HOTEL

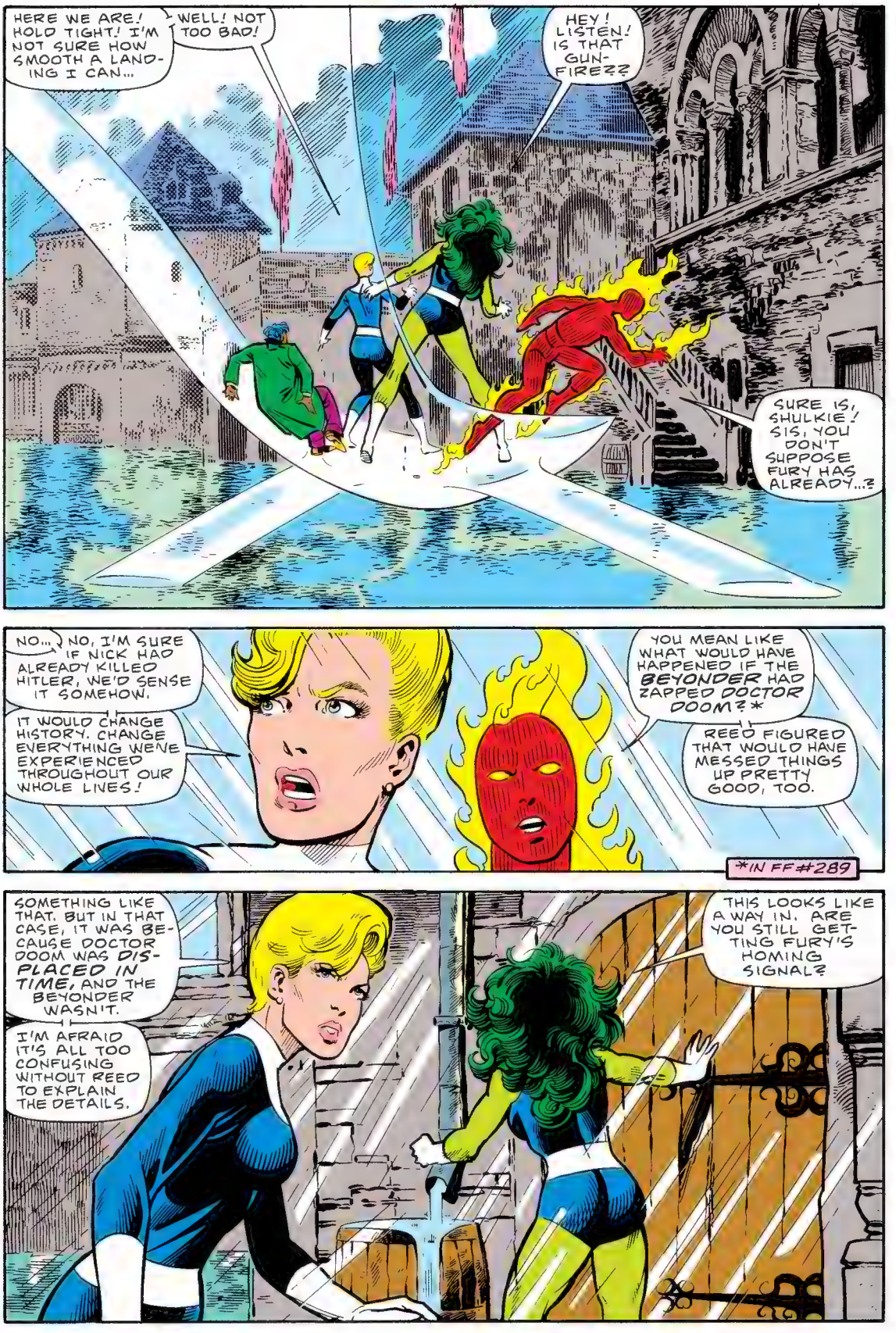
"IT GOT EVEN WEIRDER WHEN FURY USED THE IMAGE-INDUCING DEVICES IN THE S.H.I.E.L.D. FLYING CAR TO PROJECT A HOLOGRAM AROUND US, MAKING US A LITTLE LESS CONSPICUOUS.
"DISGUISED AS A U.P.S. DELIVERY VAN, WE BLENDED IN PRETTY WELL, EVEN IN THAT TIME.
SOAP
GNU556
"BUT WE HADN'T GONE MORE THAN A COUPLE OF MILES OR SO WHEN ZAP! BACK TO THE PRESENT!
"AND, JUST LIKE WHEN WE'D MOVED INTO 1936 IN THE FIRST PLACE, THERE WAS NO SENSE OF TRAVELING.
CINEMA
"THE TORCH TOOK OFF IMMEDIATELY TO CHECK ON THE WELFARE OF HIS GIRL-FRIEND...
"...WHILE WE HIGH-TAILED IT TO THE NEAREST S.H.I.E.L.D. BASE...
WHAM!
"...WHICH WASN'T THERE, CAUSE ALL OF A SUDDEN IT WAS 1936 AGAIN!!
"THE CAR WAS BUILT TO TAKE THAT KIND OF PUNISHMENT WITHOUT A SCRATCH, BUT FURY CRACKED HIS HEAD ON THE STEERING WHEEL. IN OUR OWN TIME, THAT WALL WAS A HOLOGRAM HIDING THE ENTRANCE TO THE S.H.I.E.L.D. BASE. BUT IN 1936, IT WAS REAL BRICKS!
"THEN, WHILE YOU, SUE, WENT OFF LOOKING FOR A DOCTOR FOR NICK...
"...I SORT OF GOT INVOLVED WITH THE LOCALS..."
HIYA!
NEED A LITTLE HELP?


"GOT INVOLVED."
NICE GIFT FOR UNDERSTATEMENT YOU'VE GOT THERE, SHULKIE!
I MEAN, YOU ONLY SAVED THIS POOR GUY FROM BEIN' GOOSHED BY SOME GOONS!
WHICH RAISES THE QUESTION OF WHY WE HAD TO BRING HIM ALONG WITH US.
HE SURE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ENJOYING HIMSELF!
HE'S HERE TO PREVENT FURTHER MANGLING OF HISTORY, JOHNNY. SHE-HULK'S GOOD DEED MOST LIKELY PREVENTED HIM FROM BEING KILLED...
SO LONG AS HE'S WITH US, HE WON'T SET IN MOTION ANY EVENTS THAT HE REALLY DIDN'T...
...BUT THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE HE WAS SUPPOSED TO DIE ON THIS DAY IN 1936.
SAY, HAS ANYONE ELSE NOTICED THE WAY TIME TRAVEL IMPACTS ON THE LANGUAGE?
WHAT'S THE CORRECT TENSE FOR DESCRIBING PAST EVENTS THAT HAVEN'T HAPPENED YET?
I NOTICED THAT MYSELF, BIG GREEN.
BUT PROPER ENGLISH IS THE LEAST OF OUR WORRIES...
YOU SAID A MOUTHFUL, BABY BROTHER! NICK FURY IS OUR NUMBER ONE CONCERN RIGHT NOW!
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S ACTUALLY GONNA DO WHAT YOU THINK HE'S GONNA DO!
I MEAN, I KNOW FURY HAS BEEN AN OL' WARHORSE FROM DAY ONE, BUT...
NO "BUTS" ABOUT IT, JOHNNY.
IF JENNIFER IS ACCURATE IN HER REPORTING OF WHAT HE SAID...
...HE'S ON HIS WAY TO BERLIN, TO KILL THE MAN HE PERCEIVES TO BE THE GREATEST VILLAIN OF THEM ALL--ADOLF HITLER!!

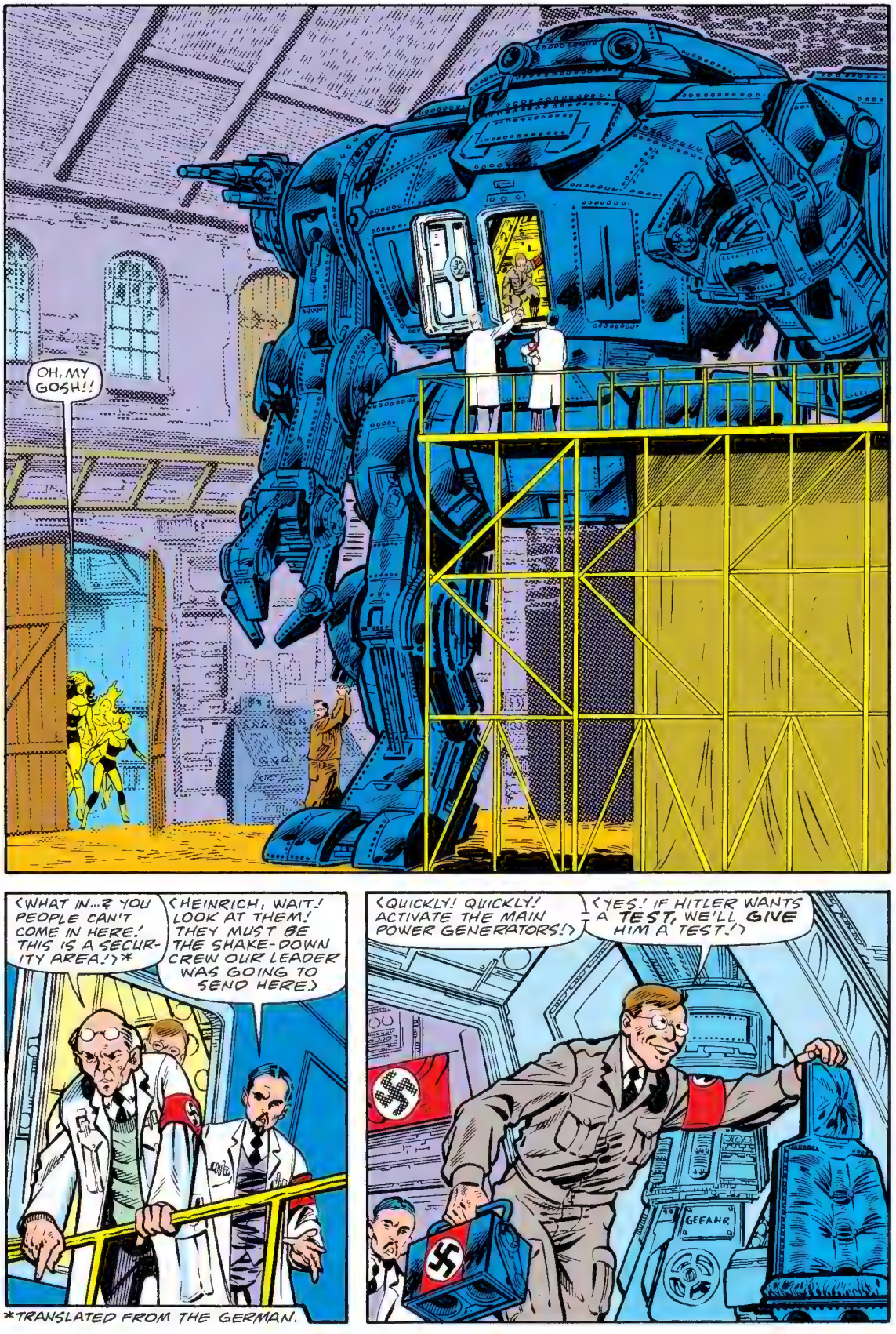

"AND WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM--NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE MIGHT NOT WANT TO!"
WASN'T TOO TOUGH SNEAKIN' PAST THEM KRAUT GUARDS OUTSIDE.
NOT SURPRISIN'. UNCLE ADOLF AIN'T COMPLETELY PARANOID YET.
THAT COMES LATER.
'CEPT THERE AIN'T GONNA BE NO "LATER."
BOY! AIN'T THIS JUST ABOUT TH' GRANDEST PLACE?
THEM RATZIS WERE TH' SCUM OF THE EARTH, NO QUESTION...
...BUT THEY SURE KNEW HOW T'LIVE TH' GOOD LIFE.
THIS JOINT'S EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN HOW I REMEMBER IT.
'COURSE BY THE TIME ME AN' TH' HOWLERS BUSTED IN HERE, IT WUZ GETTIN' NEAR TH' END OF TH' WAR.
THINGS WUZ STARTIN' T'GO PRETTY SOUR FER TH' FUHRER AN' HIS "THOUSAND YEAR REICH."
HOLD IT!


IT'S HIM!
ADOLF HITLER!!
OKAY, ADOLF, THIS IS WHERE YOU BUY THE FARM!
WA-HOO!!
B-DAM! B-DAM!
B-DAMM! B-DAMM!
EIN AMERIKANER SOLDAT!!
GOTT IN HIMMEL!!
NO USE HIDIN' BEHIND YER GOONS, 'DOLF.
THIS TIME, YA AIN'T GONNA START WORLD WAR TWO!!
NOT IF I CAN HELP IT!

AN' I CAN HELP IT!
'CAUSE IN SOME CRAZY WAY, I BIN HANDED A SECOND CHANCE. A CHANCE TA STOP TH' NIGHTMARE BEFORE IT EVEN STARTS.!
BAM!
AN' I MEAN TA USE THAT CHANCE, BABY. USE IT FER ALL THEM FOLKS THAT'LL GET SLAUGHTERED IN YOUR WAR.
FER JUNIOR JUNIPER, AN' PAM HAWLEY, AN' THIRTY EIGHT MILLION OTHER PEOPLE!!
THIS IS FER THEM.!
N-NEIN!!
ACHTUNG!
SCHIESSEN!
SCHIESSEN!
NOO!!!


HERE WE ARE! HOLD TIGHT! I'M NOT SURE HOW SMOOTH A LANDING I CAN...
WELL! NOT TOO BAD!
HEY! LISTEN! IS THAT GUNFIRE??
SURE IS, SHULKIE! SIS, YOU DON'T SUPPOSE FURY HAS ALREADY...?
NO...
NO, I'M SURE IF NICK HAD ALREADY KILLED HITLER, WE'D SENSE IT SOMEHOW.
IT WOULD CHANGE HISTORY. CHANGE EVERYTHING WE'VE EXPERIENCED THROUGHOUT OUR WHOLE LIVES!
YOU MEAN LIKE WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE BEYONDER HAD ZAPPED DOCTOR DOOM?*
REED FIGURED THAT WOULD HAVE MESSED THINGS UP PRETTY GOOD, TOO.
*IN FF#289
SOMETHING LIKE THAT. BUT IN THAT CASE, IT WAS BECAUSE DOCTOR DOOM WAS DISPLACED IN TIME, AND THE BEYONDER WASN'T.
I'M AFRAID IT'S ALL TOO CONFUSING WITHOUT REED TO EXPLAIN THE DETAILS.
THIS LOOKS LIKE A WAY IN. ARE YOU STILL GETTING FURY'S HOMING SIGNAL?

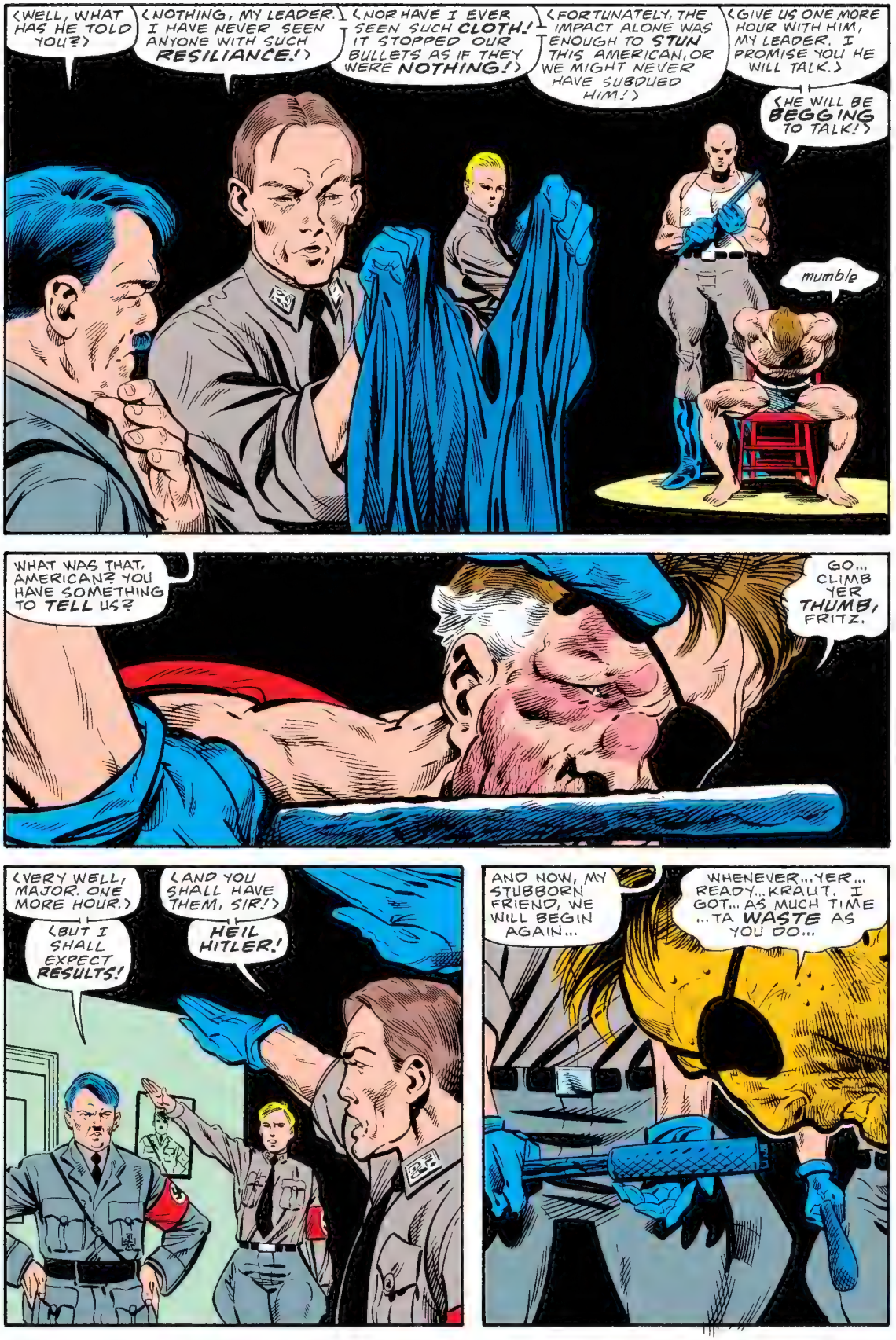
KA-RAK!
SHE-HULK! WHAT ARE YOU DOING??
I... I DON'T KNOW! I BARELY TOUCHED THE DOOR, AND...
I MEAN... I'M ALMOST AS STRONG AS THE HULK, BUT THIS IS CRAZY!
MAYBE NOT. IT SEEMS LIKE ALL OUR POWERS ARE OPERATING AT A BOOSTED LEVEL.
I CAN'T BEGIN TO GUESS WHAT'S CAUSING IT-- BUT WE MUST BE CAREFUL!
JUST BY BEING HERE, WE'RE ENDANGERING THE PROPER FLOW OF TIME. IF WE SHOULD GET CARELESS--IF WE SHOULD ACCIDENTALLY KILL SOMEONE--
THE EFFECT ON THE TIMESTREAM COULD BE DEVASTATING AND IRREVERSIBLE!
WE'LL BE CAREFUL, SUE. BUT WHAT ABOUT FURY?
ARE YOU STILL TRACKING HIM?
YES. IT'S LUCKY JENNIFER PICKED UP HIS BELT TRANSCEIVER.* IT'S HOMING PERFECTLY ON HIS S.H.I.E.L.D. SUIT'S EQUIPMENT.
THROUGH HERE, I THINK...
*LAST ISSUE

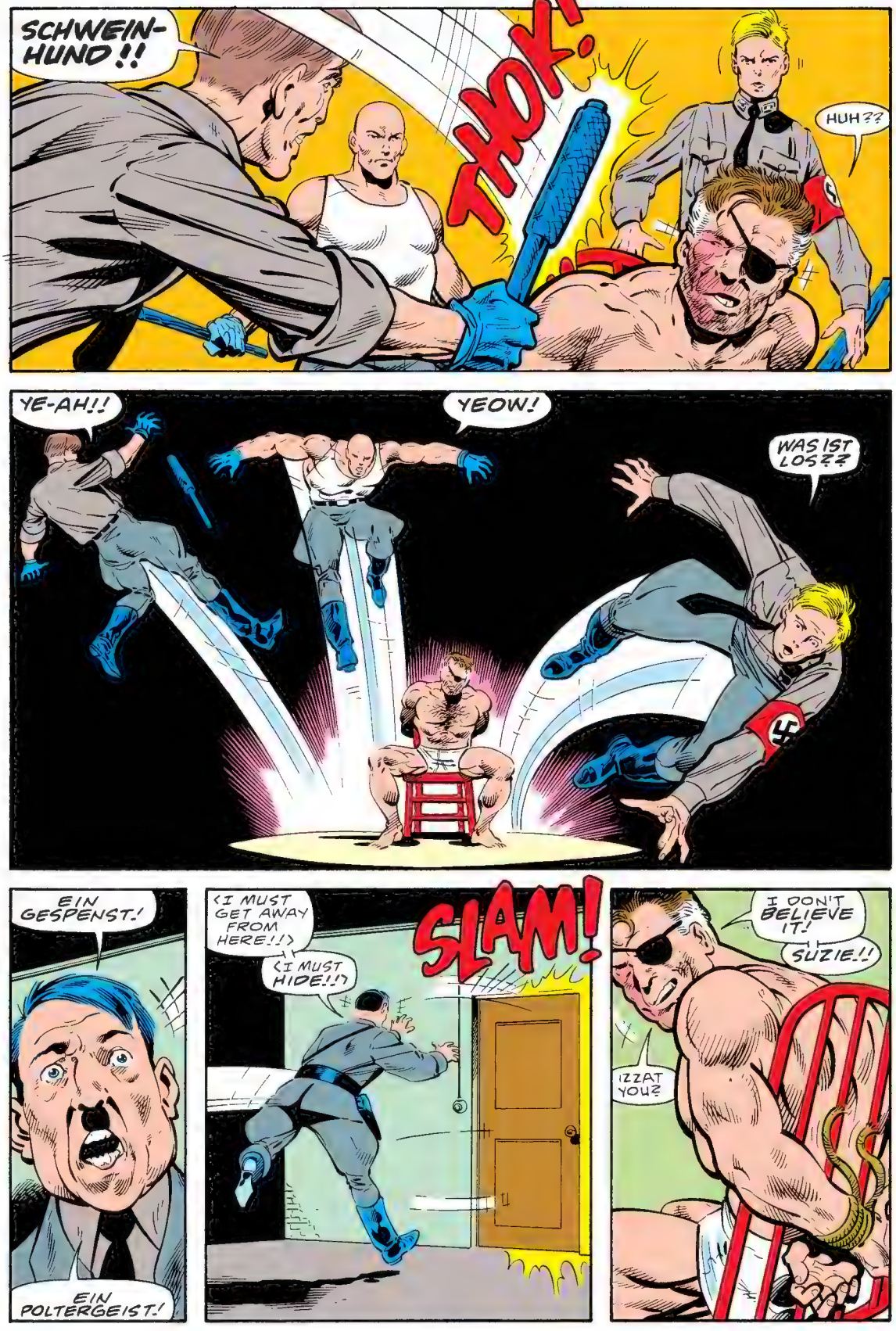

OH, MY GOSH!!
(WHAT IN...? YOU PEOPLE CAN'T COME IN HERE! THIS IS A SECURITY AREA!)*
(HEINRICH, WAIT! LOOK AT THEM! THEY MUST BE THE SHAKE-DOWN CREW OUR LEADER WAS GOING TO SEND HERE.)
*TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.
(QUICKLY! QUICKLY! ACTIVATE THE MAIN POWER GENERATORS!)
(YES! IF HITLER WANTS A TEST, WE'LL GIVE HIM A TEST.)
GEFAHR

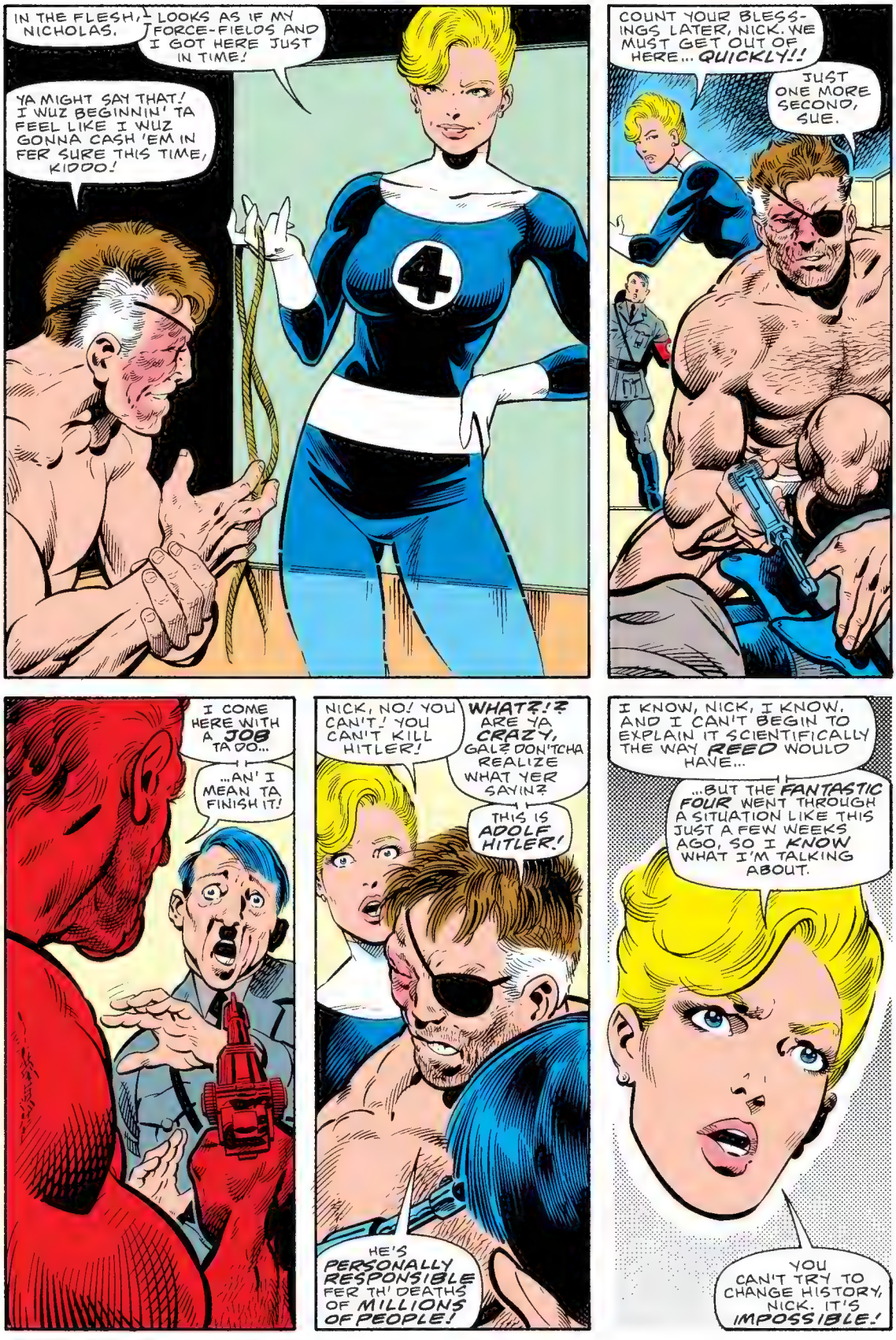
<ATTACK!!>
SUE! LOOK OUT!!
THAT'S ONLY CANNON SHELLS, NOTHING MY INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELDS CAN'T HANDLE!
BUT WHY ARE THEY SHOOTING AT US?
SUE, I'VE GOT A NASTY FEELING THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION IS "WHY NOT?"
SO LET'S NOT DEBATE IT!
LET'S CREAM THESE NAZI BOZOS AND FIND FURY!
WHANG!
TRY NOT TO HURT THEM, JOHNNY!
AMERICA ISN'T AT WAR WITH GERMANY --AND WON'T BE FOR ANOTHER SIX YEARS!!
WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF I'D WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT CREATING A DIPLOMATIC INCIDENT, SUE.
AFTER ALL, WE HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN BORN YET!

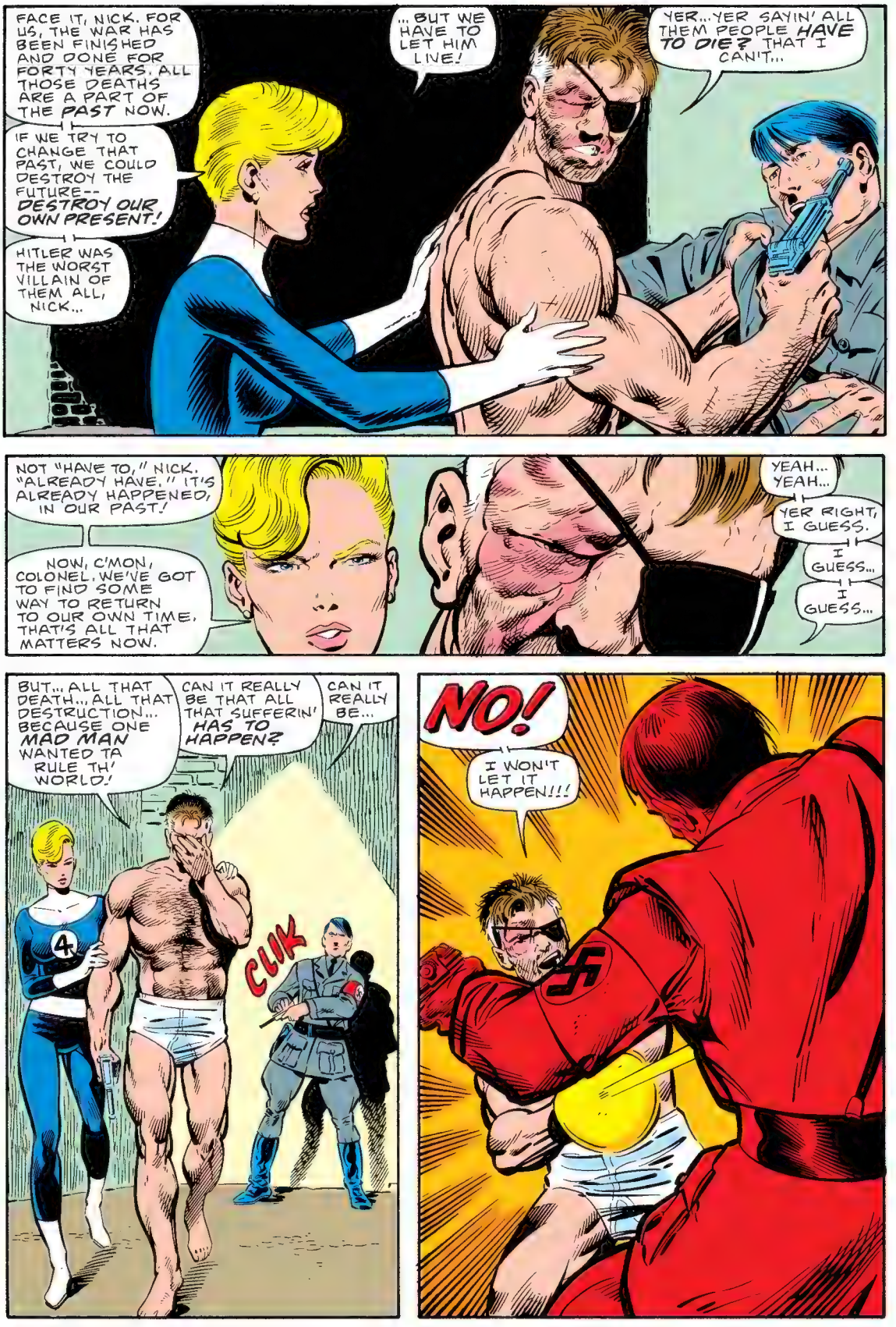
NICE GOIN', SHULKIE!
LOOKS LIKE YOUR BIG BLUE BOYFRIEND'S SUDDENLY GOT A PRONOUNCED LIMP.
THAT'S L-I-M-P, PRONOUNCED "LIMP."
TOO BAD YOU GUYS DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH.
THIS IS FUNNY STUFF HERE!
YEAH, YOU'VE GOT 'EM CONVULSED WITH APATHY, TORCHIE!
BUT JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE...
...AN' I'LL FLOOR 'EM!!

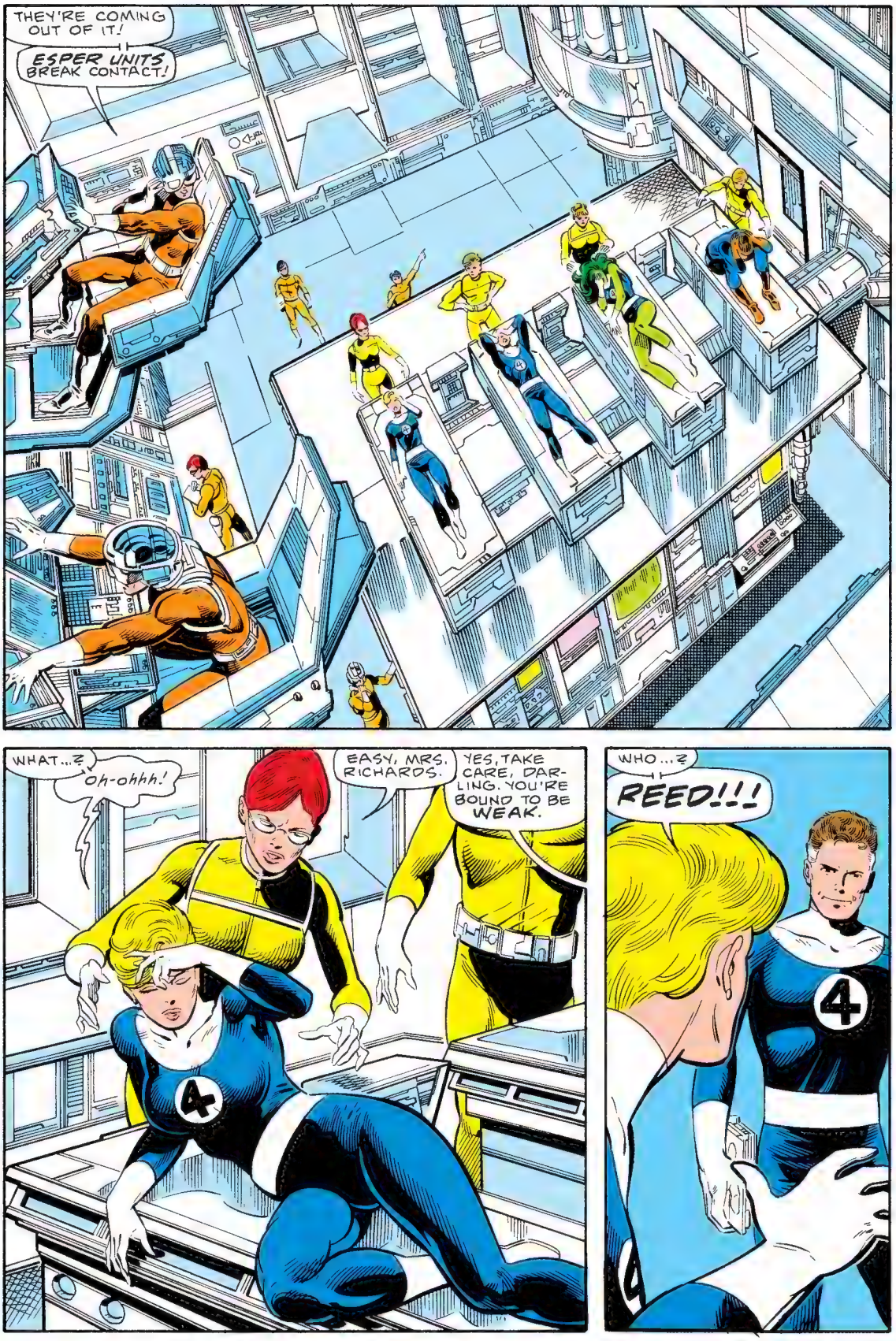
WELL, THAT WAS FUN, HUH, BOYS?
AND, HEY, NO NEED TO LET THE GOOD TIMES END HERE...
...LET'S KEEP THE EVENING ROLLING, SHALL WE?
RUN!
HELLO, SAILOR, NEW IN TOWN?
!?!
WELL, LOOKS LIKE JENNY'S DOIN' ALL RIGHT FOR HERSELF.
AND TO THINK ONLY A COUPLE OF DAYS AGO SHE WAS STARTING TO WORRY THAT HER ONLY JOB IN OUR LITTLE GROUP WAS BEING DECORATIVE!
I'D SAY SHE'S PAST THAT PARTICULAR PERSONAL CRUNCH, JOHNNY.
NOW, YOU KEEP AN EYE ON OUR FRIEND HERE WHILE SHE-HULK MOPS UP...
...AND I CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR NICK!

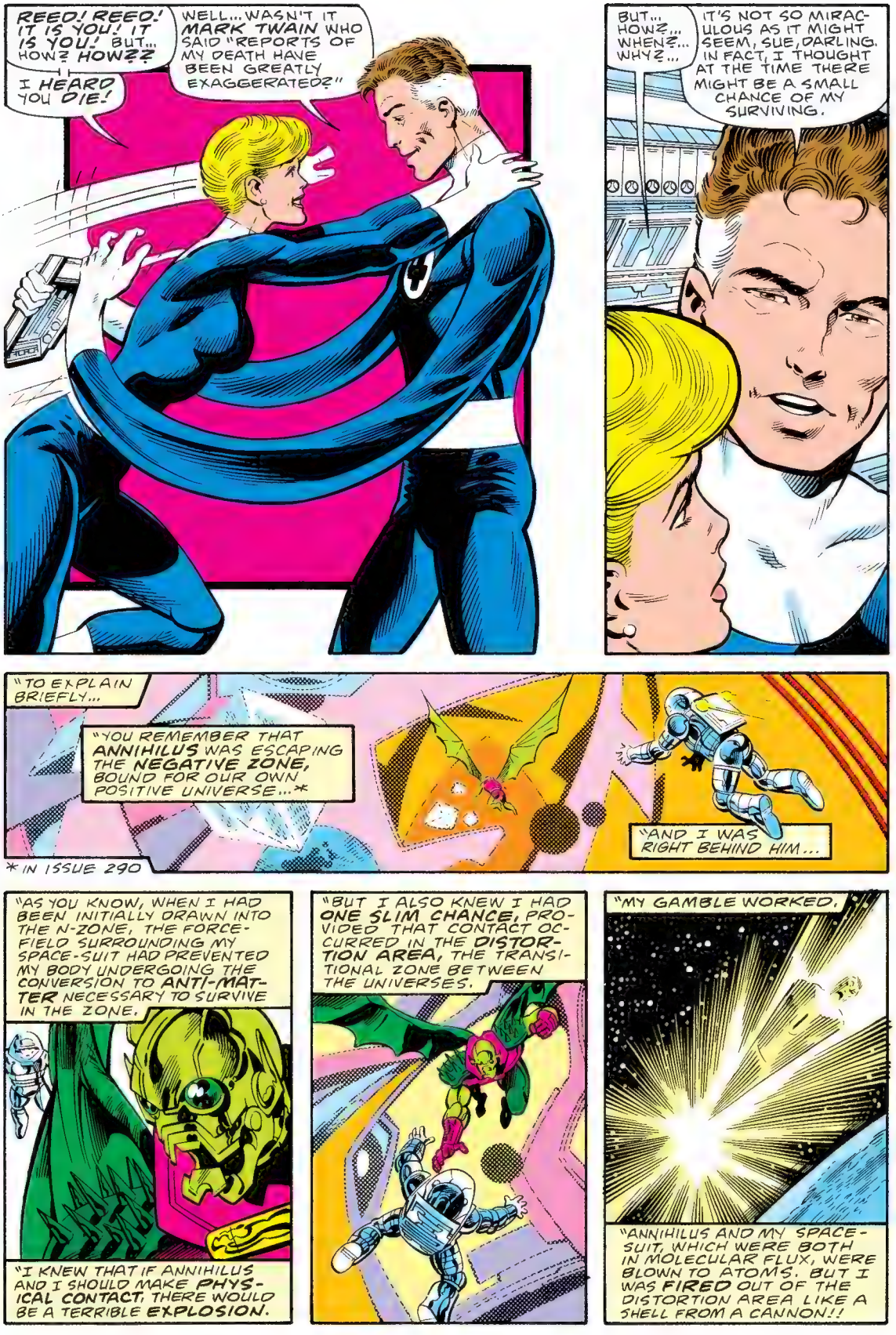

(WELL, WHAT HAS HE TOLD YOU?)
(NOTHING, MY LEADER. I HAVE NEVER SEEN ANYONE WITH SUCH RESILIANCE!)
(NOR HAVE I EVER SEEN SUCH CLOTH! IT STOPPED OUR BULLETS AS IF THEY WERE NOTHING!)
(FORTUNATELY, THE IMPACT ALONE WAS ENOUGH TO STUN THIS AMERICAN, OR WE MIGHT NEVER HAVE SUBDUED HIM!)
(GIVE US ONE MORE HOUR WITH HIM, MY LEADER. I PROMISE YOU HE WILL TALK.)
(HE WILL BE BEGGING TO TALK!)
mumble
WHAT WAS THAT, AMERICAN? YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL US?
GO... CLIMB YER THUMB, FRITZ.
(VERY WELL, MAJOR. ONE MORE HOUR.)
(BUT I SHALL EXPECT RESULTS!)
(AND YOU SHALL HAVE THEM, SIR!)
HEIL HITLER!
AND NOW, MY STUBBORN FRIEND, WE WILL BEGIN AGAIN...
WHENEVER... YER... READY... KRAUT. I GOT... AS MUCH TIME ...TA WASTE AS YOU DO...

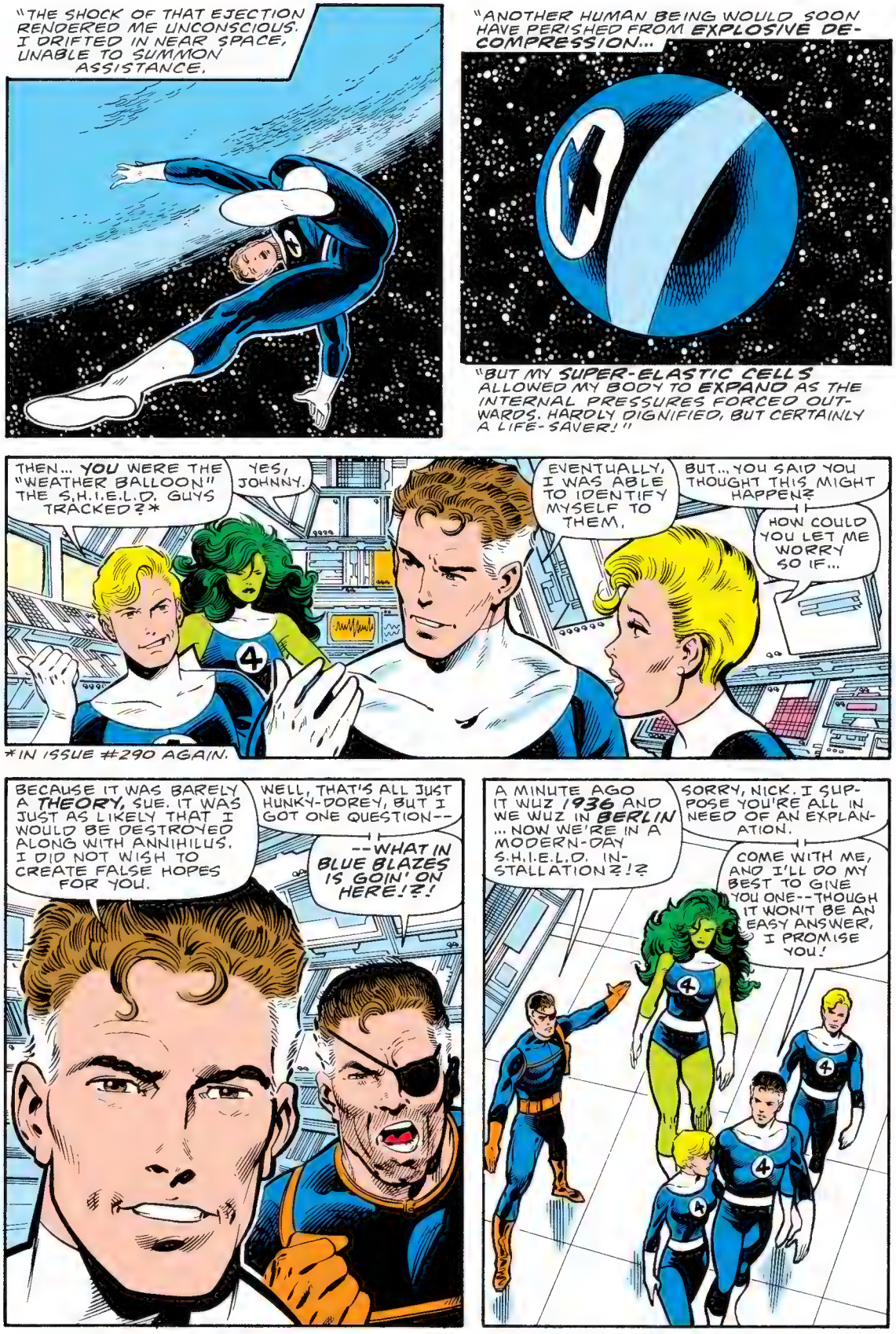

SCHWEIN-HUND!!
THOK!
HUH??
YE-AH!!
YEOW!
WAS IST LOS??
EIN GESPENST!
EIN POLTERGEIST!
<I MUST GET AWAY FROM HERE!!>
<I MUST HIDE!!>
SLAM!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
SUZIE!!
IZZAT YOU?


IN THE FLESH, NICHOLAS.
LOOKS AS IF MY FORCE-FIELDS AND I GOT HERE JUST IN TIME!
YA MIGHT SAY THAT! I WUZ BEGINNIN' TA FEEL LIKE I WUZ GONNA CASH 'EM IN FER SURE THIS TIME, KIDDO!
COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS LATER, NICK. WE MUST GET OUT OF HERE... QUICKLY!!
JUST ONE MORE SECOND, SUE.
I COME HERE WITH A JOB TA DO...
...AN' I MEAN TA FINISH IT!
NICK, NO! YOU CAN'T! YOU CAN'T KILL HITLER!
WHAT?! ARE YA CRAZY, GAL? DON'TCHA REALIZE WHAT YER SAYIN?
THIS IS ADOLF HITLER!
HE'S PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FER TH' DEATHS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE!
I KNOW, NICK, I KNOW, AND I CAN'T BEGIN TO EXPLAIN IT SCIENTIFICALLY THE WAY REED WOULD HAVE...
...BUT THE FANTASTIC FOUR WENT THROUGH A SITUATION LIKE THIS JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO, SO I KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.
YOU CAN'T TRY TO CHANGE HISTORY, NICK. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!


FACE IT, NICK. FOR US, THE WAR HAS BEEN FINISHED AND DONE FOR FORTY YEARS. ALL THOSE DEATHS ARE A PART OF THE PAST NOW.
IF WE TRY TO CHANGE THAT PAST, WE COULD DESTROY THE FUTURE-- DESTROY OUR OWN PRESENT!
HITLER WAS THE WORST VILLAIN OF THEM ALL, NICK...
... BUT WE HAVE TO LET HIM LIVE!
YER... YER SAYIN' ALL THEM PEOPLE HAVE TO DIE? THAT I CAN'T...
NOT "HAVE TO," NICK. "ALREADY HAVE." IT'S ALREADY HAPPENED, IN OUR PAST!
NOW, C'MON, COLONEL. WE'VE GOT TO FIND SOME WAY TO RETURN TO OUR OWN TIME. THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS NOW.
YEAH... YEAH...
YER RIGHT, I GUESS.
I GUESS...
I GUESS...
BUT... ALL THAT DEATH... ALL THAT DESTRUCTION... BECAUSE ONE MAD MAN WANTED TA RULE TH' WORLD!
CAN IT REALLY BE THAT ALL THAT SUFFERIN' HAS TO HAPPEN?
CAN IT REALLY BE...
CLIK
NO!
I WON'T LET IT HAPPEN!!!


THEY'RE COMING OUT OF IT!
ESPER UNITS BREAK CONTACT!
WHAT...?
Oh-ohhh!
EASY, MRS. RICHARDS.
YES, TAKE CARE, DARLING. YOU'RE BOUND TO BE WEAK.
WHO...?
REED!!!


REED! REED! IT IS YOU! IT IS YOU! BUT... HOW? HOW??
I HEARD YOU DIE!
WELL... WASN'T IT MARK TWAIN WHO SAID "REPORTS OF MY DEATH HAVE BEEN GREATLY EXAGGERATED?"
BUT... HOW?... WHEN?... WHY?...
IT'S NOT SO MIRACULOUS AS IT MIGHT SEEM, SUE, DARLING. IN FACT, I THOUGHT AT THE TIME THERE MIGHT BE A SMALL CHANCE OF MY SURVIVING.
"TO EXPLAIN BRIEFLY...
"YOU REMEMBER THAT ANNIHILUS WAS ESCAPING THE NEGATIVE ZONE, BOUND FOR OUR OWN POSITIVE UNIVERSE...*
"AND I WAS RIGHT BEHIND HIM...
*IN ISSUE 290
"AS YOU KNOW, WHEN I HAD BEEN INITIALLY DRAWN INTO THE N-ZONE, THE FORCE-FIELD SURROUNDING MY SPACE-SUIT HAD PREVENTED MY BODY UNDERGOING THE CONVERSION TO ANTI-MATTER NECESSARY TO SURVIVE IN THE ZONE.
"I KNEW THAT IF ANNIHILUS AND I SHOULD MAKE PHYSICAL CONTACT, THERE WOULD BE A TERRIBLE EXPLOSION.
"BUT I ALSO KNEW I HAD ONE SLIM CHANCE, PROVIDED THAT CONTACT OCCURRED IN THE DISTORTION AREA, THE TRANSITIONAL ZONE BETWEEN THE UNIVERSES.
"MY GAMBLE WORKED.
"ANNIHILUS AND MY SPACE-SUIT, WHICH WERE BOTH IN MOLECULAR FLUX, WERE BLOWN TO ATOMS. BUT I WAS FIRED OUT OF THE DISTORTION AREA LIKE A SHELL FROM A CANNON!!


"THE SHOCK OF THAT EJECTION RENDERED ME UNCONSCIOUS. I DRIFTED IN NEAR SPACE, UNABLE TO SUMMON ASSISTANCE.
"ANOTHER HUMAN BEING WOULD SOON HAVE PERISHED FROM EXPLOSIVE DE-COMPRESSION...
"BUT MY SUPER-ELASTIC CELLS ALLOWED MY BODY TO EXPAND AS THE INTERNAL PRESSURES FORCED OUT-WARDS. HARDLY DIGNIFIED, BUT CERTAINLY A LIFE-SAVER!"
THEN... YOU WERE THE "WEATHER BALLOON" THE S.H.I.E.L.D. GUYS TRACKED?*
YES, JOHNNY.
EVENTUALLY, I WAS ABLE TO IDENTIFY MYSELF TO THEM.
BUT... YOU SAID YOU THOUGHT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN?
HOW COULD YOU LET ME WORRY SO IF...
*IN ISSUE #290 AGAIN.
BECAUSE IT WAS BARELY A THEORY, SUE. IT WAS JUST AS LIKELY THAT I WOULD BE DESTROYED ALONG WITH ANNIHILUS. I DID NOT WISH TO CREATE FALSE HOPES FOR YOU.
WELL, THAT'S ALL JUST HUNKY-DOREY, BUT I GOT ONE QUESTION--
--WHAT IN BLUE BLAZES IS GOIN' ON HERE!?!
A MINUTE AGO IT WUZ 1936 AND WE WUZ IN BERLIN ... NOW WE'RE IN A MODERN-DAY S.H.I.E.L.D. IN-STALLATION?!?
SORRY, NICK. I SUP-POSE YOU'RE ALL IN NEED OF AN EXPLAN-ATION.
COME WITH ME, AND I'LL DO MY BEST TO GIVE YOU ONE--THOUGH IT WON'T BE AN EASY ANSWER, I PROMISE YOU!

HERE IS THE CENTER OF IT ALL, THE "EYE" OF THE TIME-STORM, SO TO SPEAK, JOSEPH "LICORICE" CALHOUN, FORMER CLARINET PLAYER FOR "SWEET" TOMMY CONNORS' JAZZ BAND.
WE LOCATED HIM IN A CHARITY WARD AT MID-TOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL AND HAD HIM BROUGHT TO THIS BASE FOR CARE AND OBSERVATION.
OH, MY GOSH!
IT... IT IS HIM!! OUR POOR, CONFUSED FRIEND! BUT... HE LOOKS A MILLION YEARS OLD!
EIGHTY-THREE, TO BE EXACT, SHE-HULK. AND FIFTY OF THOSE YEARS HE HAS SPENT IN DEEP COMA.
YOU RECALL WHAT HE TOLD YOU AFTER YOU SAVED HIM FROM BEING RUN DOWN IN 1936? OH, YES, WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. THE S.H.I.E.L.D EXTRASENSORY PERCEPTION UNIT HAS BEEN MONITORING ALL YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE EXPERIENCE.
MR. CALHOUN TOLD YOU HE SOMETIMES HAD DREAMS THAT CAME TRUE. DREAMS THAT SEEMED TO ACTUALLY ALTER THE SHAPE OF REALITY ITSELF.
AND WE NOW KNOW THIS WAS TRUE! MR. CALHOUN POSSESSES A POWERFUL MUTANT BRAIN!
"BUT AFTER HE WAS DELIBERATELY RUN DOWN BY THAT CAR IN 1936, THAT BRAIN WAS THROWN INTO AN IRREVERSIBLE COMA.
"HE HAS REMAINED COMATOSE FOR HALF A CENTURY!"
BUT... BUT REED, HE DIDN'T GET HIT BY THAT CAR! I STOPPED IT!
DID YOU, SHE-HULK? IT'S TRUE YOU THOUGHT YOU DID.

BUT THE 1936 YOU SEEMED TO BE IN WAS A CREATION OF JOSEPH CALHOUN'S MUTANT POWER. YOU SEE, FOR JUST A FEW MOMENTS, A DAY OR SO AGO, HE BEGAN TO EMERGE FROM HIS COMA.
IT WAS A PASSING EFFECT, BUT AS HE REVIVED, HIS MIND REACHED OUT TO RE-SHAPE THE WORLD IN THE IMAGE OF THE LAST THING HE REMEMBERED.
THE LAST HOURS OF HIS CONSCIOUS LIFE WERE REPLAYED. AND YOU FOUR, FLYING DOWN FROM THE S.H.I.E.L.D. SPACE STATION, FOUND YOURSELF CAUGHT IN ONE OF THE TIME-WAVES.
HE WAS SLIPPING IN AND OUT OF COMA, AND HIS MIND SENT OUT RIPPLES, LIKE THOSE CAUSED BY DROPPING A PEBBLE IN A SMALL POND. EXCEPT THAT THESE HAD THE APPEARANCE OF BEING RIPPLES IN TIME ITSELF! 1986 BECAME 1936 BECAME 1986... AND SO ON.
UNTIL YOU INTERFERED WITH HIS REPLAY OF HIS MEMORIES, JEN.
AT THE MOMENT YOU "PREVENTED" THE INCIDENT WHICH HAD ORIGINALLY PUT HIM INTO COMA, HIS MUTANT MIND LOCKED INTO EACH OF YOURS.
YOU WERE DRAWN INTO HIS DREAMWORLD OF 1936. AND BECAUSE IT WAS A DREAM, YOU FOUND YOUR OWN REALITY HAD TAKEN ON A VAGUELY DREAMLIKE QUALITY. YOUR POWERS WERE INCREASED DRAMATICALLY, FOR INSTANCE.
BUT ACTUALLY, NONE OF YOU MOVED FROM THE SPOT YOU OCCUPIED AT THE EXACT MOMENT SHE-HULK ALTERED "HISTORY." OUR SEARCH TEAMS FOUND YOU FROZEN IN THREE LOCATIONS ACROSS THE CITY.
WAIT A MINUTE!! ARE YOU SAYING EVERYTHING WE WENT THROUGH IN THE LAST FEW HOURS...
...WAS SOMEBODY ELSE'S DREAM!?!
THAT'S MY BEST GUESS, JOHNNY. AND, OF COURSE, WHEN NICK ALTERED GLOBAL HISTORY BY KILLING HITLER, IT WAS THE SHOCK NEEDED TO SNAP YOU ALL OUT OF THE DREAMSCAPE.
HOLD IT-- LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT -- YOU'RE SAYING IT'S A GOOD THING I DID WHAT I DID... EVEN IF I DIDN'T DO IT?
IN ESSENCE, SHE-HULK.
OH, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE, REED? YOU'RE ALIVE -- FURY DIDN'T KILL HITLER -- AND WE'RE BACK IN OUR OWN TIME. CAN'T WE JUST CALL IT A DAY?
WHAT WE JUST WENT THROUGH, SIS, YOU COULD CALL A LIFETIME!
NEXT:
CENTRAL CITY DOES NOT ANSWER!

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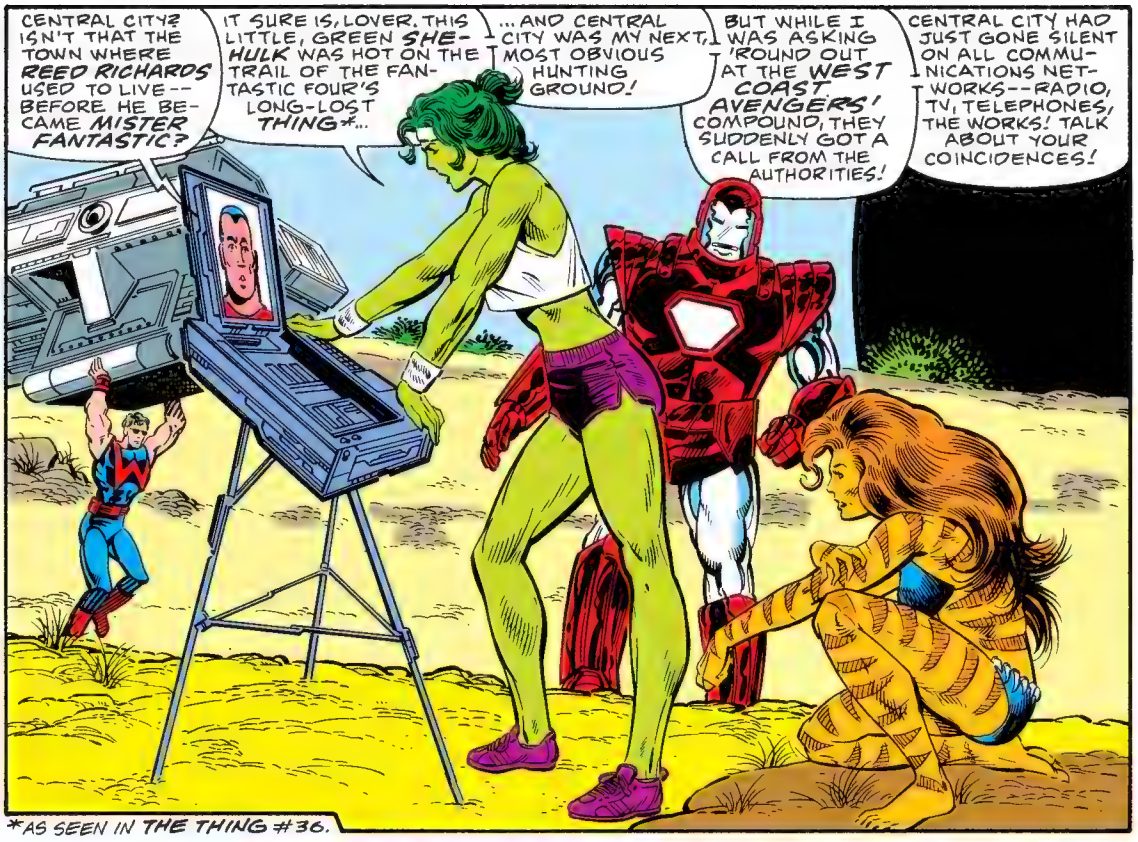
THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

Fantastic Four

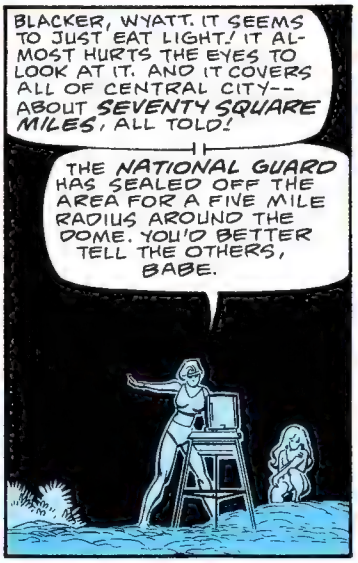
BLACK OUT!

CENTRAL CITY DOES NOT ANSWER!
WHAT?!
"I KNOW HOW MEN IN EXILE FEED ON DREAMS OF HOPE."
"AGAMEMNON"
AESCHYLUS
(525-456 B.C.)

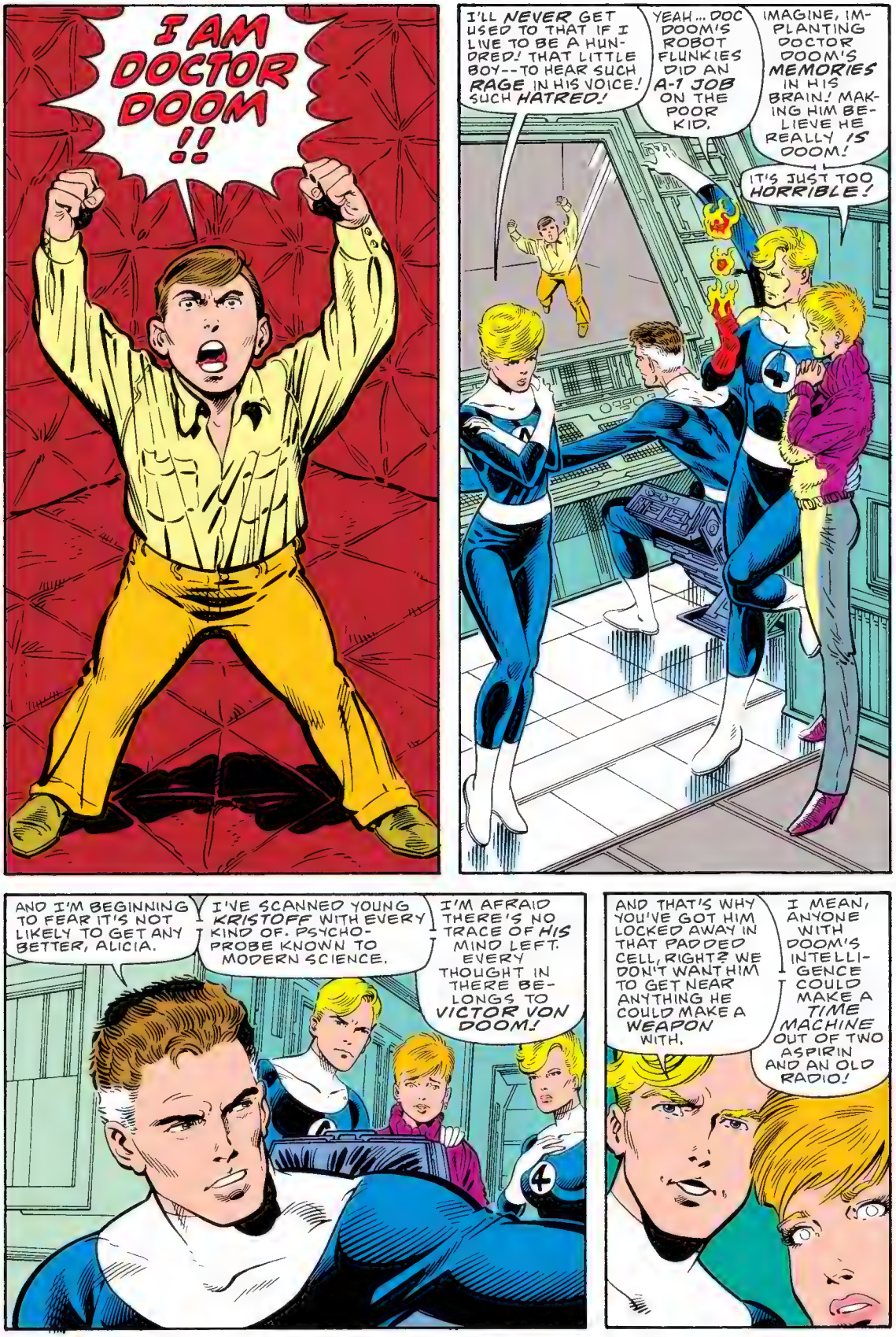

CENTRAL CITY? ISN'T THAT THE TOWN WHERE REED RICHARDS USED TO LIVE -- BEFORE HE BECAME MISTER FANTASTIC?
IT SURE IS, LOVER. THIS LITTLE, GREEN SHE-HULK WAS HOT ON THE TRAIL OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S LONG-LOST THING*...
...AND CENTRAL CITY WAS MY NEXT, MOST OBVIOUS HUNTING GROUND!
BUT WHILE I WAS ASKING 'ROUND OUT AT THE WEST COAST AVENGERS' COMPOUND, THEY SUDDENLY GOT A CALL FROM THE AUTHORITIES!
CENTRAL CITY HAD JUST GONE SILENT ON ALL COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS -- RADIO, TV, TELEPHONES, THE WORKS! TALK ABOUT YOUR COINCIDENCES!
*AS SEEN IN THE THING #36.

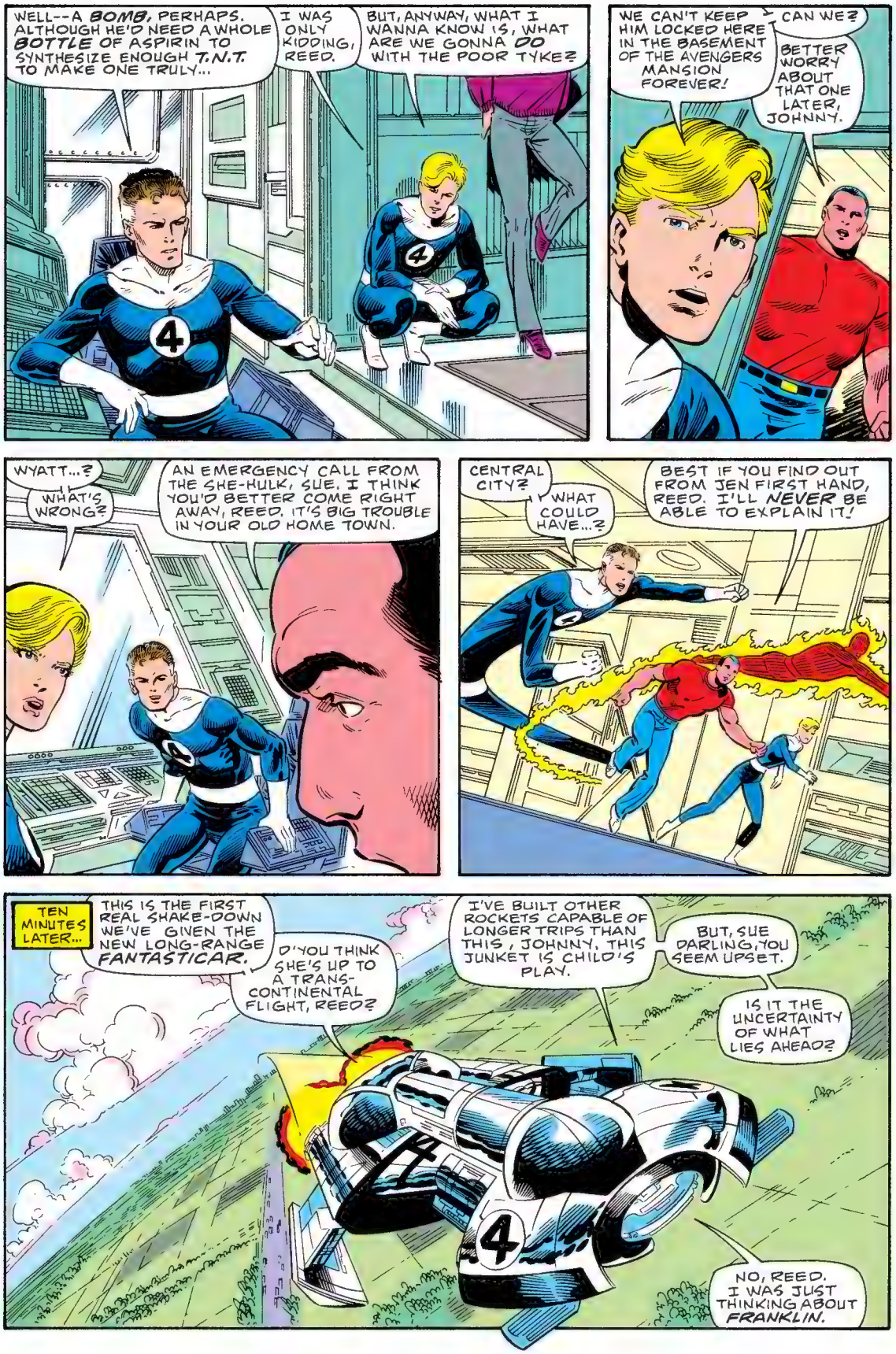
IRON MAN, TIGRA, WONDER MAN AND I HIGH-TAILED IT OUT HERE, AND THIS IS WHAT WE FOUND...

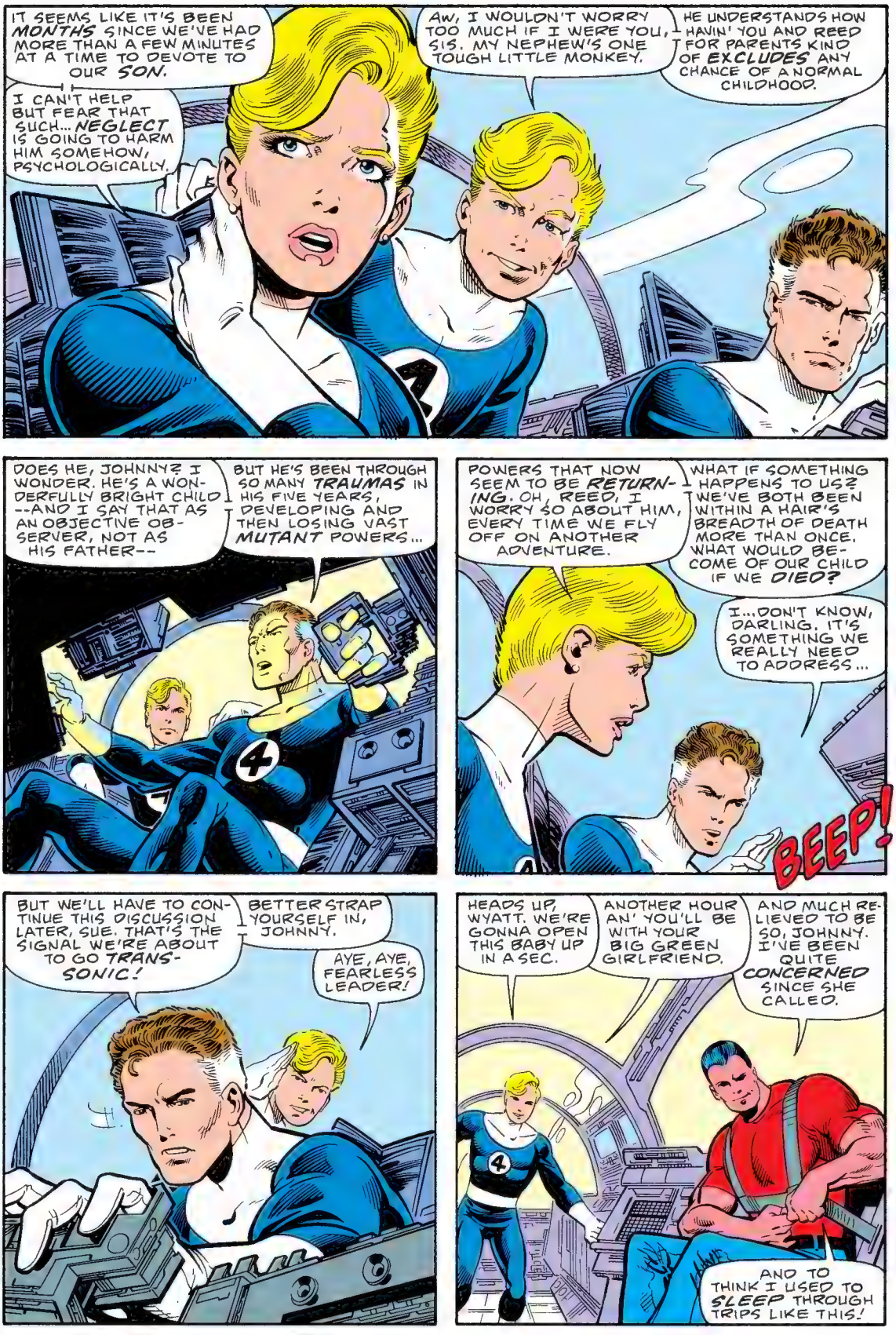
THAT DOME?!
WHAT ON EARTH IS IT? IS IT AS BIG AS IT LOOKS ON THE MONITOR? OR AS BLACK?

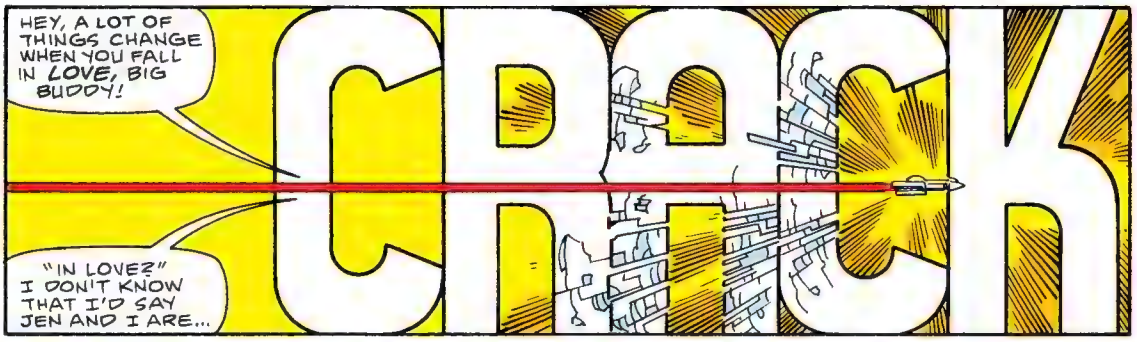

BLACKER, WYATT. IT SEEMS TO JUST EAT LIGHT! IT ALMOST HURTS THE EYES TO LOOK AT IT. AND IT COVERS ALL OF CENTRAL CITY -- ABOUT SEVENTY SQUARE MILES, ALL TOLD!
THE NATIONAL GUARD HAS SEALED OFF THE AREA FOR A FIVE MILE RADIUS AROUND THE DOME. YOU'D BETTER TELL THE OTHERS, BABE.

WAY AHEAD OF YOU, JENNIFER!
YOU AND THE REST OF THE AVENGERS STAND BY!


I AM DOCTOR DOOM !!
I'LL NEVER GET USED TO THAT IF I LIVE TO BE A HUNDRED! THAT LITTLE BOY--TO HEAR SUCH RAGE IN HIS VOICE! SUCH HATRED!
YEAH... DOC DOOM'S ROBOT FLUNKIES DID AN A-1 JOB ON THE POOR KID.
IMAGINE, IMPLANTING DOCTOR DOOM'S MEMORIES IN HIS BRAIN! MAKING HIM BELIEVE HE REALLY IS DOOM!
IT'S JUST TOO HORRIBLE!
AND I'M BEGINNING TO FEAR IT'S NOT LIKELY TO GET ANY BETTER, ALICIA.
I'VE SCANNED YOUNG KRISTOFF WITH EVERY KIND OF PSYCHO-PROBE KNOWN TO MODERN SCIENCE.
I'M AFRAID THERE'S NO TRACE OF HIS MIND LEFT. EVERY THOUGHT IN THERE BELONGS TO VICTOR VON DOOM!
AND THAT'S WHY YOU'VE GOT HIM LOCKED AWAY IN THAT PADDED CELL, RIGHT? WE DON'T WANT HIM TO GET NEAR ANYTHING HE COULD MAKE A WEAPON WITH.
I MEAN, ANYONE WITH DOOM'S INTELLIGENCE COULD MAKE A TIME MACHINE OUT OF TWO ASPIRIN AND AN OLD RADIO!

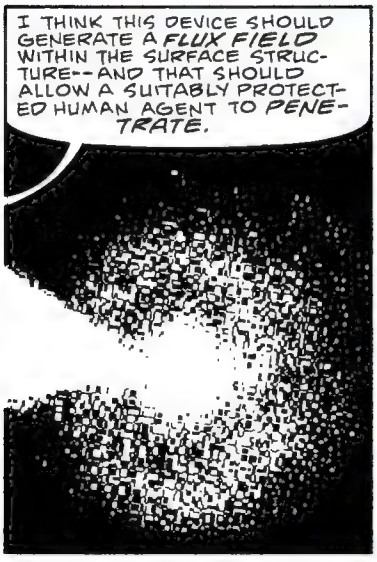

WELL--A BOMB, PERHAPS. ALTHOUGH HE'D NEED A WHOLE BOTTLE OF ASPIRIN TO SYNTHESIZE ENOUGH T.N.T. TO MAKE ONE TRULY...
I WAS ONLY KIDDING, REED.
BUT, ANYWAY, WHAT I WANNA KNOW IS, WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO WITH THE POOR TYKE?
WE CAN'T KEEP HIM LOCKED HERE IN THE BASEMENT OF THE AVENGERS MANSION FOREVER!
CAN WE?
BETTER WORRY ABOUT THAT ONE LATER, JOHNNY.
WYATT...?
WHAT'S WRONG?
AN EMERGENCY CALL FROM THE SHE-HULK, SUE. I THINK YOU'D BETTER COME RIGHT AWAY, REED. IT'S BIG TROUBLE IN YOUR OLD HOME TOWN.
CENTRAL CITY?
WHAT COULD HAVE...?
BEST IF YOU FIND OUT FROM JEN FIRST HAND, REED. I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN IT!
TEN MINUTES LATER...
THIS IS THE FIRST REAL SHAKE-DOWN WE'VE GIVEN THE NEW LONG-RANGE FANTASTICAR.
D'YOU THINK SHE'S UP TO A TRANS-CONTINENTAL FLIGHT, REED?
I'VE BUILT OTHER ROCKETS CAPABLE OF LONGER TRIPS THAN THIS, JOHNNY. THIS JUNKET IS CHILD'S PLAY.
BUT, SUE DARLING, YOU SEEM UPSET.
IS IT THE UNCERTAINTY OF WHAT LIES AHEAD?
NO, REED. I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT FRANKLIN.

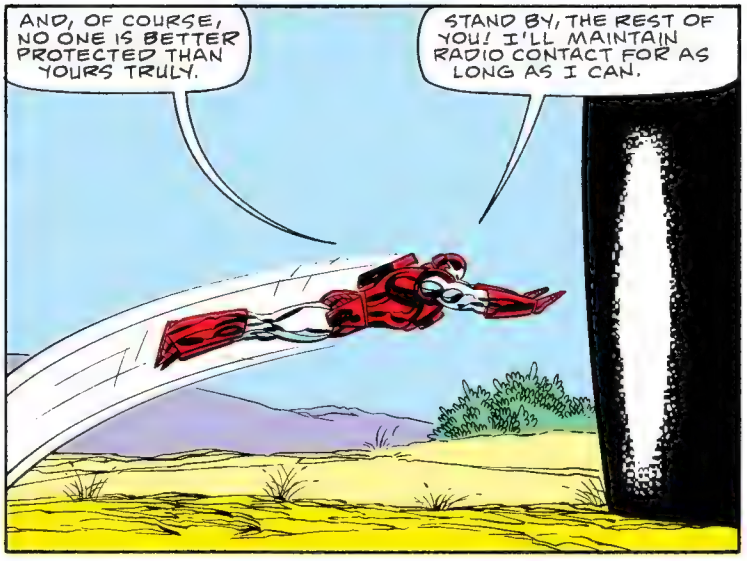

IT SEEMS LIKE IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE WE'VE HAD MORE THAN A FEW MINUTES AT A TIME TO DEVOTE TO OUR SON.
I CAN'T HELP BUT FEAR THAT SUCH... NEGLECT IS GOING TO HARM HIM SOMEHOW, PSYCHOLOGICALLY.
AW, I WOULDN'T WORRY TOO MUCH IF I WERE YOU, SIS. MY NEPHEW'S ONE TOUGH LITTLE MONKEY.
HE UNDERSTANDS HOW HAVIN' YOU AND REED FOR PARENTS KIND OF EXCLUDES ANY CHANCE OF A NORMAL CHILDHOOD.
DOES HE, JOHNNY? I WONDER. HE'S A WONDERFULLY BRIGHT CHILD --AND I SAY THAT AS AN OBJECTIVE OBSERVER, NOT AS HIS FATHER--
BUT HE'S BEEN THROUGH SO MANY TRAUMAS IN HIS FIVE YEARS, DEVELOPING AND THEN LOSING VAST MUTANT POWERS...
POWERS THAT NOW SEEM TO BE RETURNING. OH, REED, I WORRY SO ABOUT HIM, EVERY TIME WE FLY OFF ON ANOTHER ADVENTURE.
WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO US? WE'VE BOTH BEEN WITHIN A HAIR'S BREADTH OF DEATH MORE THAN ONCE. WHAT WOULD BECOME OF OUR CHILD IF WE DIED?
I...DON'T KNOW, DARLING. IT'S SOMETHING WE REALLY NEED TO ADDRESS...
BEEP!
BUT WE'LL HAVE TO CONTINUE THIS DISCUSSION LATER, SUE. THAT'S THE SIGNAL WE'RE ABOUT TO GO TRANSSONIC!
BETTER STRAP YOURSELF IN, JOHNNY.
AYE, AYE, FEARLESS LEADER!
HEADS UP, WYATT. WE'RE GONNA OPEN THIS BABY UP IN A SEC.
ANOTHER HOUR AN' YOU'LL BE WITH YOUR BIG GREEN GIRLFRIEND.
AND MUCH RELIEVED TO BE SO, JOHNNY. I'VE BEEN QUITE CONCERNED SINCE SHE CALLED.
AND TO THINK I USED TO SLEEP THROUGH TRIPS LIKE THIS!

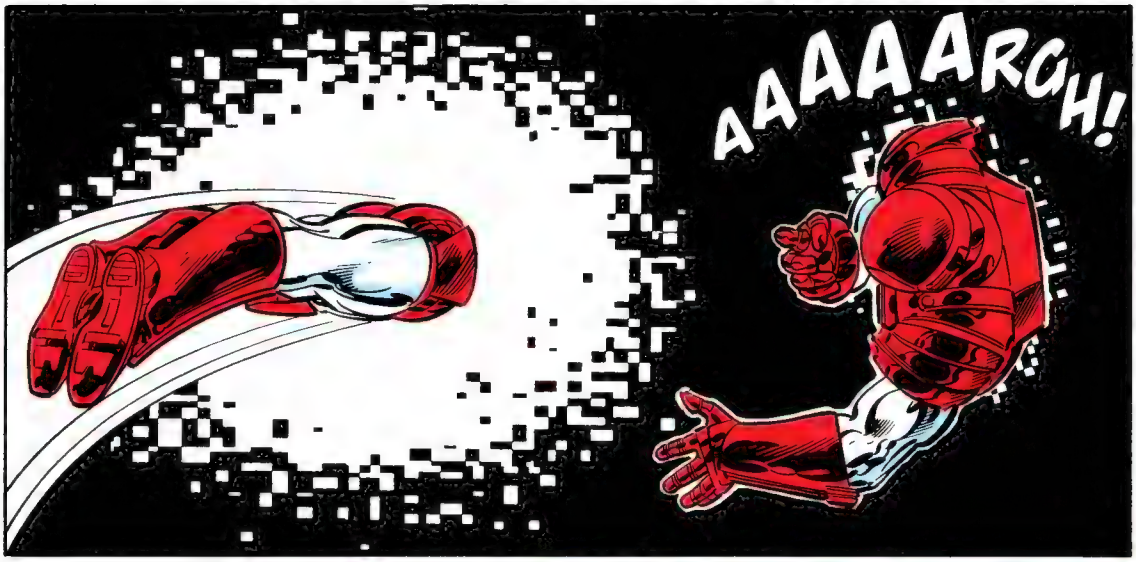

HEY, A LOT OF THINGS CHANGE WHEN YOU FALL IN LOVE, BIG BUDDY!
"IN LOVE?" I DON'T KNOW THAT I'D SAY JEN AND I ARE...
CRACK

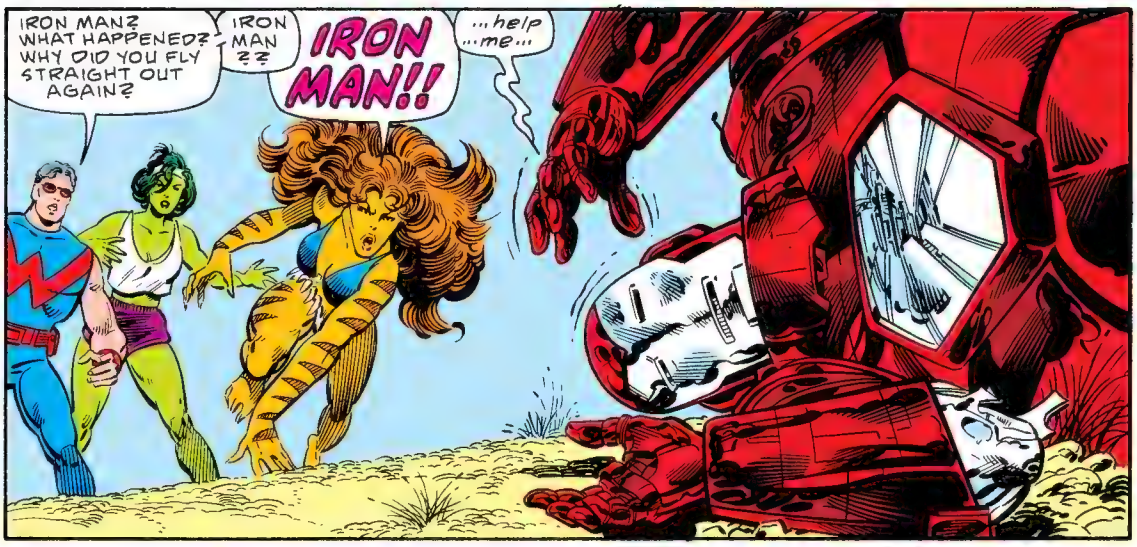
MEAN-WHILE...
WELL, I'VE SEEN SOME INTER-ESTING TINKER-TOYS IN MY TIME WITH THE FANTASTIC FOUR, BUT THIS JUST ABOUT TAKES THE CAKE, IRON MAN.
ARE YOU TRYING TO TAKE OVER REED RICHARDS' PLACE AS THE WORLD'S TOP MAD SCIENTIST?
I'M NOT MAD, SHE-HULK.
JUST A LITTLE PEEVED...

BUT SERIOUSLY... I'VE ANALYZED THE COM-POSITION OF THAT DOME AS CLOSELY AS I CAN AND IT'S AL-MOST COMPLETELY IMPERMEABLE.
KEY WORD BEING "ALMOST."

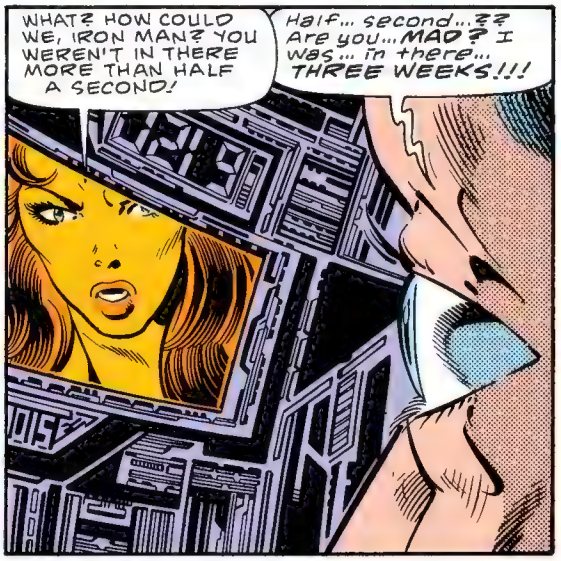

I THINK THIS DEVICE SHOULD GENERATE A FLUX FIELD WITHIN THE SURFACE STRUC-TURE--AND THAT SHOULD ALLOW A SUITABLY PROTECT-ED HUMAN AGENT TO PENE-TRATE.


AND, OF COURSE, NO ONE IS BETTER PROTECTED THAN YOURS TRULY.
STAND BY, THE REST OF YOU! I'LL MAINTAIN RADIO CONTACT FOR AS LONG AS I CAN.


AAAAARGH!

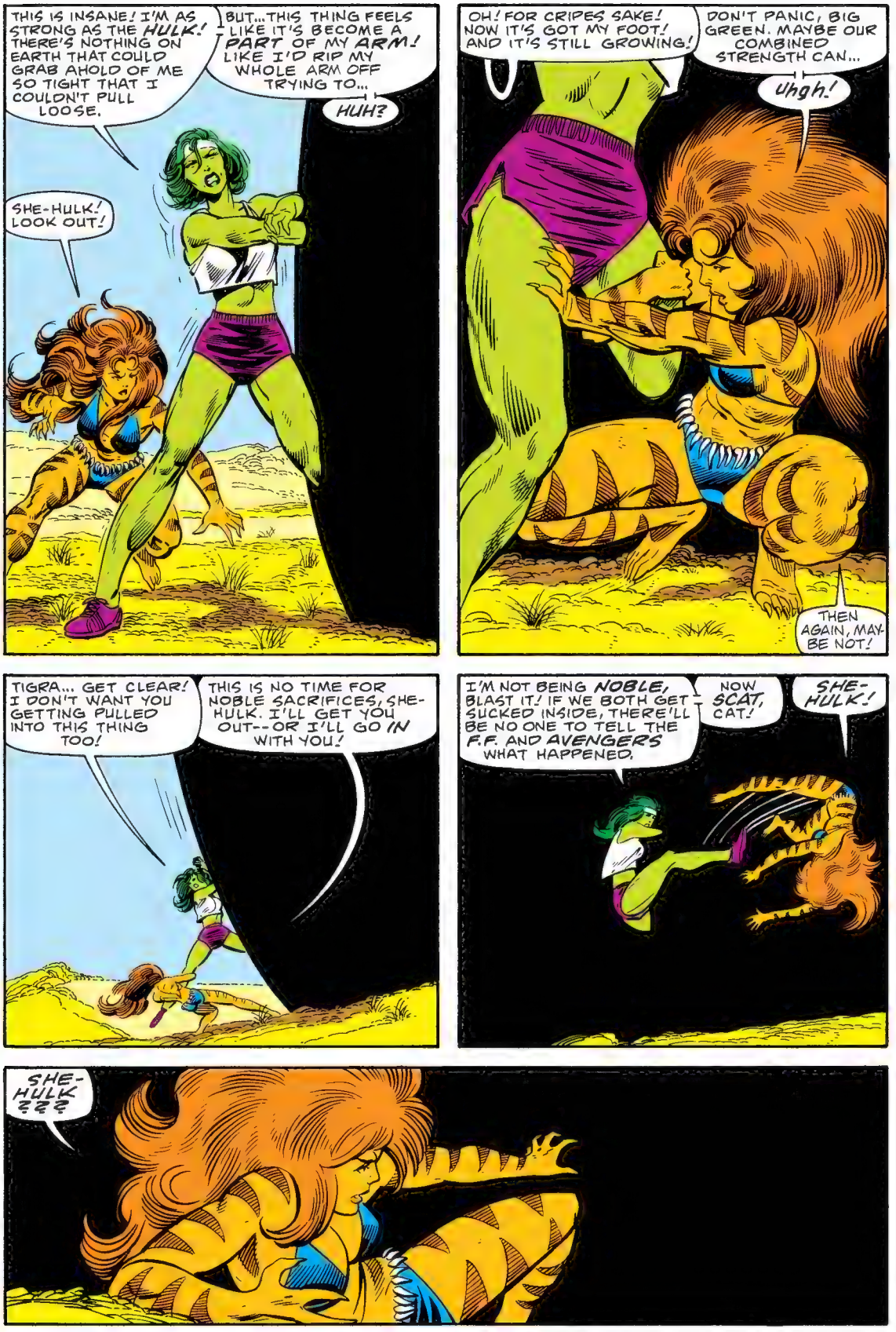

IRON MAN? WHAT HAPPENED? WHY DID YOU FLY STRAIGHT OUT AGAIN?
IRON MAN ??
IRON MAN!!
...help ...me...

TONY! IT'S ME, GREER. CAN YOU HEAR ME? WHAT HAPPENED? YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'VE BEEN DRAGGED BACKWARDS THROUGH A SAWMILL!
...power...gone... Food concentrates... exhausted. Barely managed to... ESCAPE alive.
why... didn't anyone... come AFTER me...?


WHAT? HOW COULD WE, IRON MAN? YOU WEREN'T IN THERE MORE THAN HALF A SECOND!
Half... second...?? Are you... MAD? I was... in there... THREE WEEKS!!!

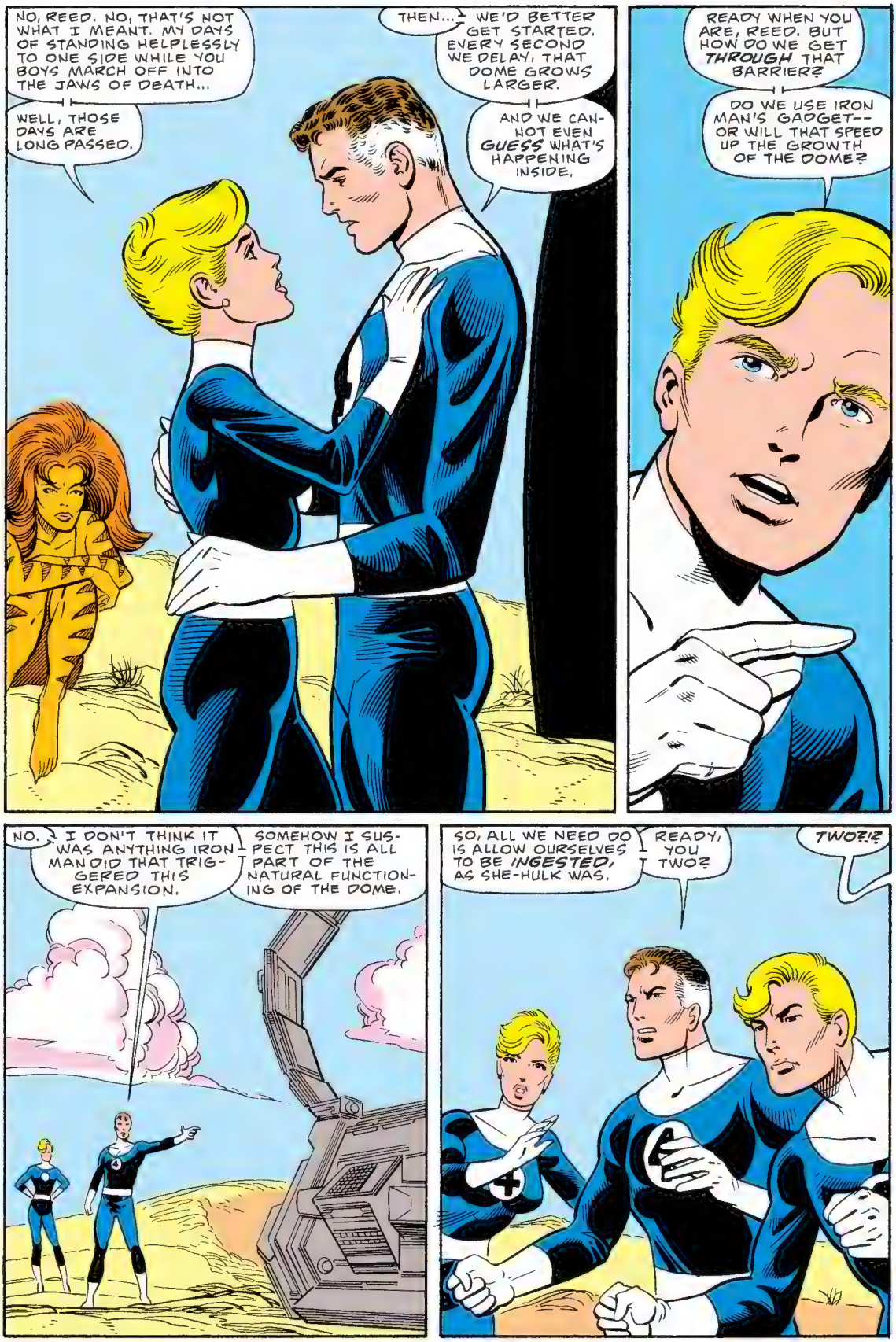
HE SOUNDS LIKE HE'S IN A PRETTY BAD WAY. MAYBE I SHOULD CRACK OPEN THAT TIN SUIT SO WE CAN...
SHE-HULK, NO! LEAVE HIM ALONE!
HEY, EASE OFF, CAT LADY! I WAS ONLY OFFERING TO HELP, Y'KNOW.
WE KNOW, SHE-HULK.
BUT THERE'RE A FEW TOO MANY PEOPLE WHO KNOW WHO'S INSIDE THAT ARMOR AS IT IS.
SINCE YOU'RE NOT ON THE AVENGERS' ACTIVE LIST RIGHT NOW, YOU'D BETTER LET US HANDLE THIS.
I'LL FLY IRON MAN BACK TO OUR HEADQUARTERS. HE CAN BE PROPERLY TENDED THERE.
YOU GALS STAY ON GUARD HERE. AND DON'T GET INTO ANY TROUBLE WHILE I'M GONE!
Th-thanks, Simon.
"STAY OUT OF TROUBLE?" Hmph! THAT'S ALL I NEED! A GUY WITH THE I.Q. OF A MACK TRUCK TELLING US "GALS" TO STAY OUT OF TROUBLE!
WHO DOES HE THINK WE ARE, BETTY AND VERONICA?
OH, WONDER MAN MEANS WELL, SHE-HULK. HE'S JUST A LITTLE BIT BEHIND THE TIMES, Y'KNOW?
HE WAS IN SOMETHING LIKE SUSPENDED ANIMATION FOR A WHOLE BUNCH OF YEARS, REMEMBER?
Mmm. I STILL DON'T CARE MUCH FOR THE IDEA OF...
...OF...
DID YOU JUST FEEL A CHILL?
YEAH, I... HEY! HOLD THE PHONE! IS IT MY IMAGINATION, OR HAS THE ZONE OF DARKNESS EXPANDED ALL OF A SUDDEN?

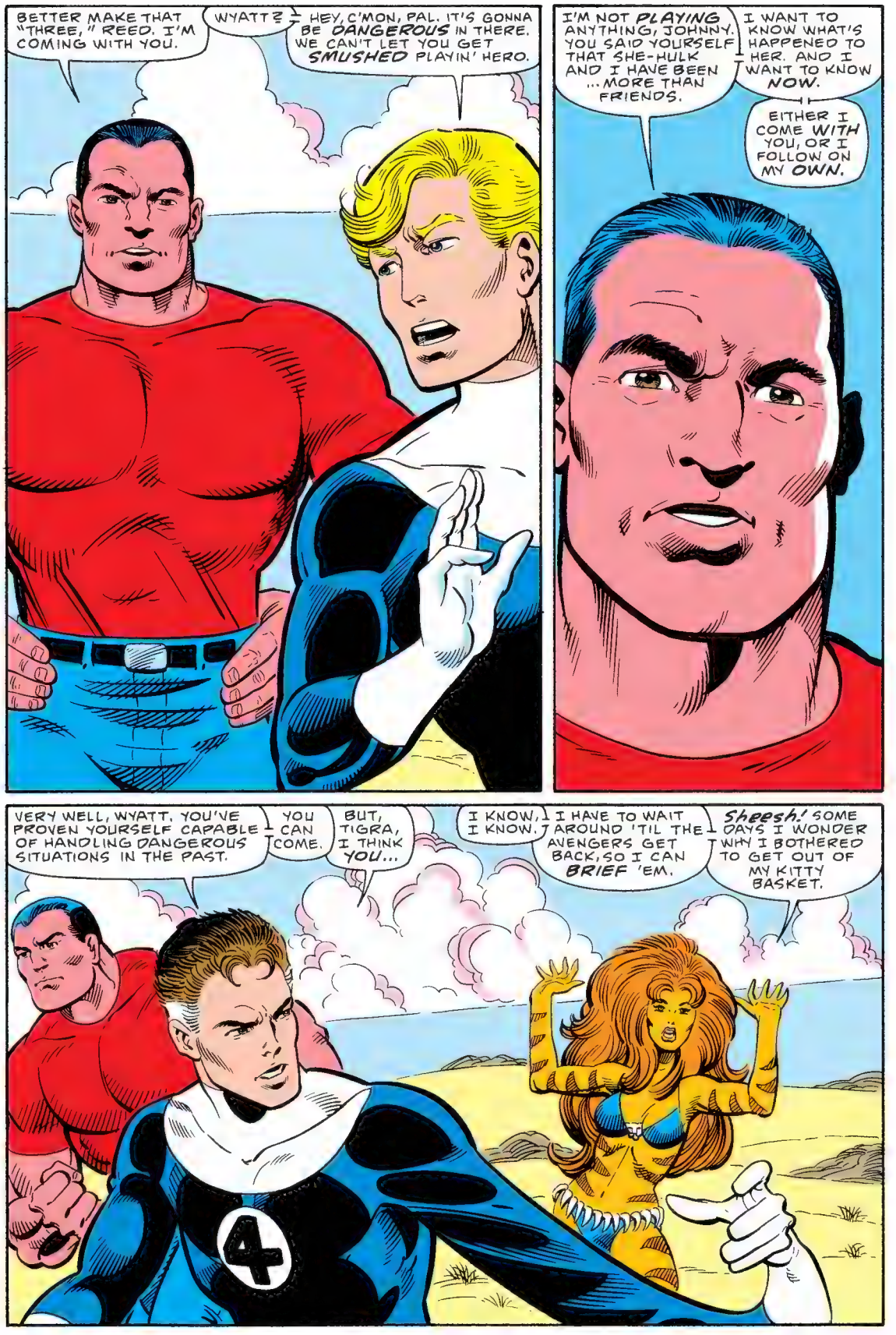
IT'S NOT IMAGINATION, PUDDY!
THAT BARRIER IS GROWING!
AND AT A VERY RESPECTABLE SPEED!
WHAT CAN HAVE HAPPENED?
BEATS ME.
MAYBE SOMETHING IRON MAN DID WHILE HE WAS...
HEY!
SHE-HULK!
IT'S GRABBED ME!
I CAN'T PULL MY HAND OUT!!


THIS IS INSANE! I'M AS STRONG AS THE HULK! THERE'S NOTHING ON EARTH THAT COULD GRAB AHOLD OF ME SO TIGHT THAT I COULDN'T PULL LOOSE.
BUT...THIS THING FEELS LIKE IT'S BECOME A PART OF MY ARM! LIKE I'D RIP MY WHOLE ARM OFF TRYING TO...
HUH?
SHE-HULK! LOOK OUT!
OH! FOR CRIPES SAKE! NOW IT'S GOT MY FOOT! AND IT'S STILL GROWING!
DON'T PANIC, BIG GREEN. MAYBE OUR COMBINED STRENGTH CAN...
Uhgh!
THEN AGAIN, MAYBE NOT!
TIGRA... GET CLEAR! I DON'T WANT YOU GETTING PULLED INTO THIS THING TOO!
THIS IS NO TIME FOR NOBLE SACRIFICES, SHE-HULK. I'LL GET YOU OUT--OR I'LL GO IN WITH YOU!
I'M NOT BEING NOBLE, BLAST IT! IF WE BOTH GET SUCKED INSIDE, THERE'LL BE NO ONE TO TELL THE F.F. AND AVENGERS WHAT HAPPENED.
NOW SCAT, CAT!
SHE-HULK!
SHE-HULK ???

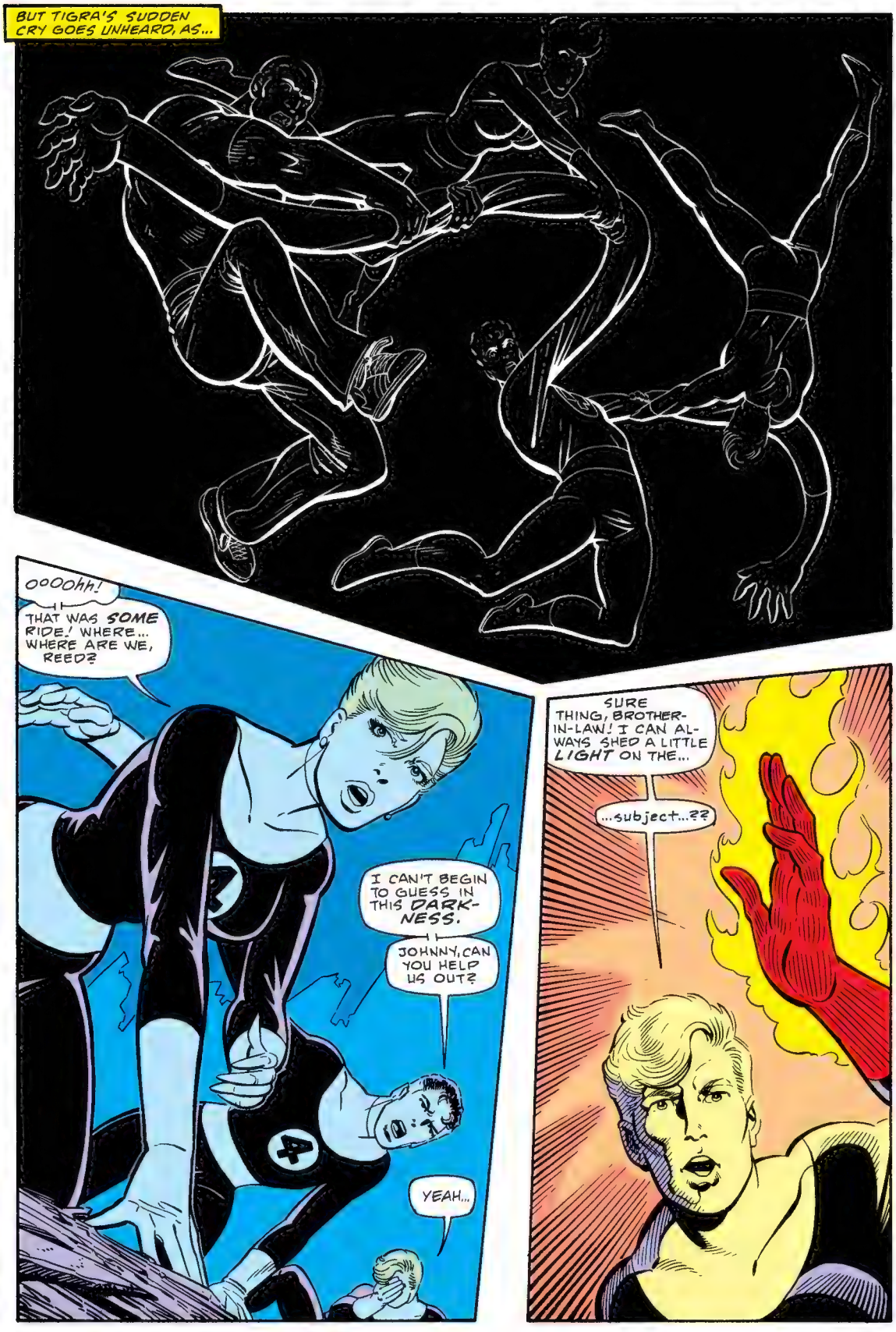
REED! SUE! JOHNNY!
YOUR TIMING COULDN'T BE BETTER!
WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE, TIGRA? WHERE IS SHE-HULK?
AFTER A QUICK RE-CAP...
THEN... IF WE CAN ASSUME IRON MAN'S STATEMENTS TO HAVE BEEN ACCURATE, THIS DOME IS SOME KIND OF TEMPORAL INTERFACE.
TIME IS PASSING MUCH, MUCH MORE QUICKLY INSIDE THE DOME THAN OUT HERE.
YET, WHEN IT CAUGHT SHE-HULK...
TIGRA, DID YOU SAY SHE WAS IN PAIN?
NO, SHE WAS JUST FRUSTRATED 'CAUSE SHE COULDN'T PULL HER ARM OUT.
WHY WOULD YOU EXPECT HER TO EXPERIENCE PAIN, REED?
IF TIME INSIDE THE DOME IS PASSING AT THE RATE OF ONE MONTH FOR EACH SECOND OF OUR TIME, AS IRON MAN'S EXPERIENCE WOULD INDICATE...
...THE FLOW OF BLOOD BETWEEN SHE-HULK'S ARM AND HAND WOULD HAVE BEEN DISRUPTED. THE NORMAL PUMPING OF HER HEART, OUTSIDE THE DOME, COULD NOT HAVE FED BLOOD FAST ENOUGH TO HER HAND, INSIDE THE DOME.
GANGRENE WOULD HAVE SET IN ALMOST INSTANTLY, AND THAT IS EXCRUCIATINGLY PAINFUL.

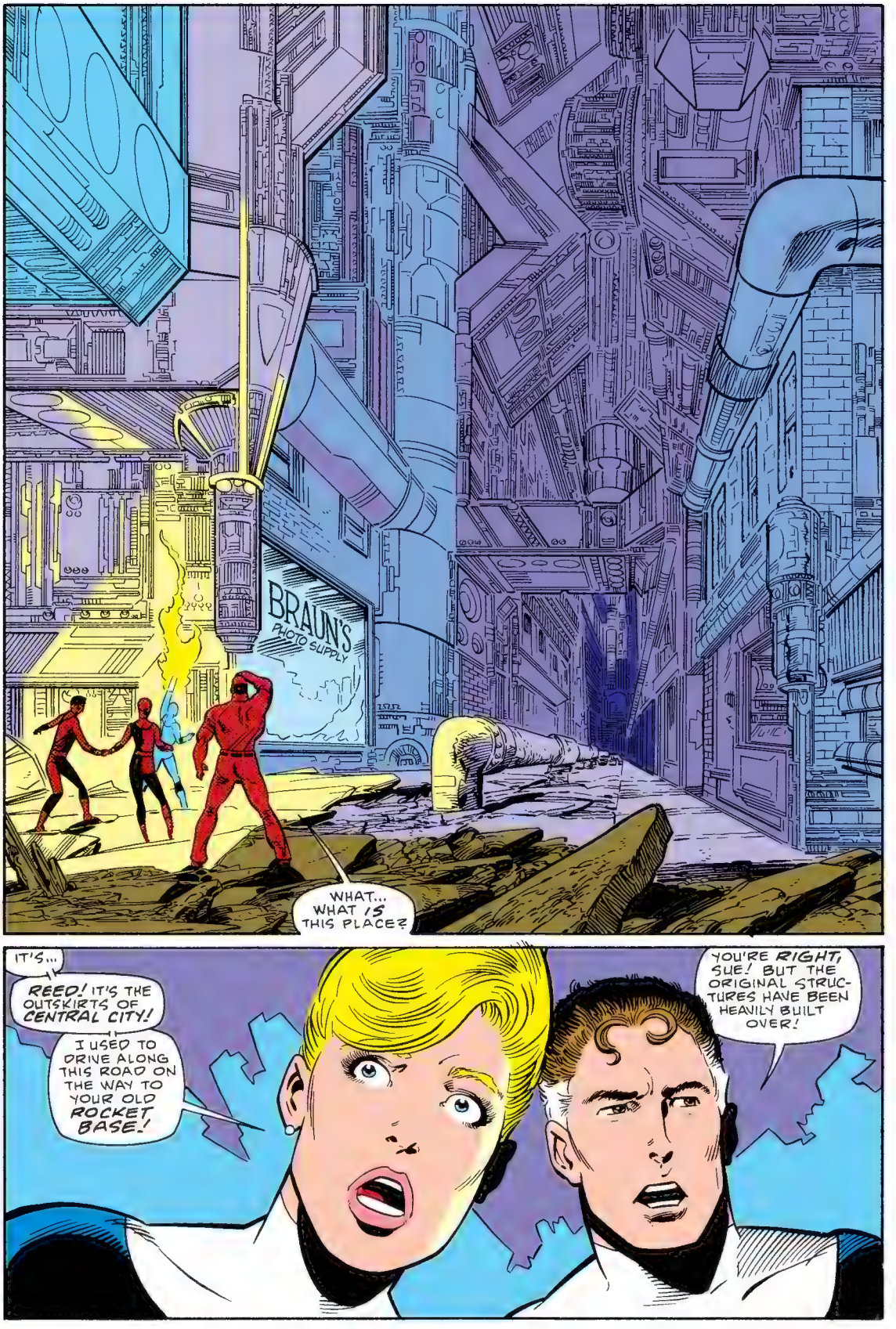
THAT'S ALL VERY SCIENTIFIC SOUNDING, REED, BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
IS JEN ALL RIGHT?
THAT I CANNOT SAY, WYATT. I'M SORRY.
BUT THE EVIDENCE SEEMS TO SUGGEST THIS BLACKNESS HAS SUBSTANCE, THAT IT HAS DIMENSION ALL ITS OWN...
THAT MEANS IT'S THICK, RIGHT?
YES. AND THAT SUGGESTS IT MIGHT BE REASONABLY SAFE FOR US TO ATTEMPT TO PENETRATE...
SUE? IS THERE STILL A PROBLEM, DARLING?
THE SAME PROBLEM, REED, HERE WE ARE, READY ONCE AGAIN TO FLY OFF INTO THE FACE OF WHO-KNOWS-WHAT...
...WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST GUARANTEE WE WON'T MEET THE SAME FATE AS POOR IRON MAN...
...OR WORSE!
FOR EVERY SECOND THAT GOES BY OUT HERE, A MONTH GOES BY INSIDE THE DOME? AND SHE-HULK HAS ALREADY BEEN IN THERE FOR, WHAT? TEN MINUTES? THAT'S SIX HUNDRED SECONDS, REED! FIFTY YEARS!
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US, IF WE'RE TRAPPED INSIDE THAT DOME FOR SO LONG?
WE COULD DIE IN THERE. DIE OF OLD AGE!
AND WE'D NEVER SEE FRANKLIN AGAIN. NOT EVER...
SUE...
DARLING, IF YOU'D RATHER WAIT OUT HERE, JOHNNY AND I CAN...

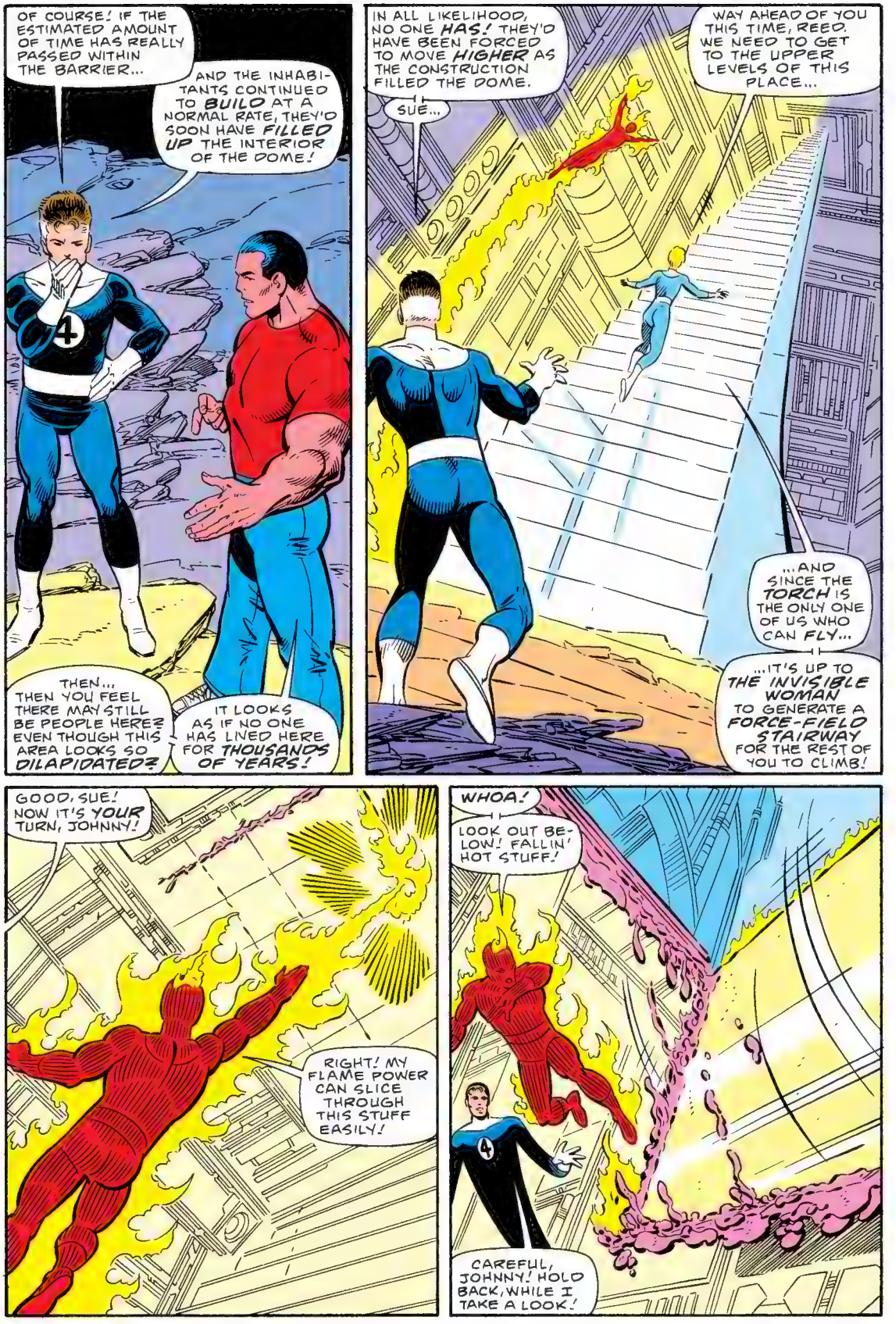

NO, REED. NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT. MY DAYS OF STANDING HELPLESSLY TO ONE SIDE WHILE YOU BOYS MARCH OFF INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH...
WELL, THOSE DAYS ARE LONG PASSED.
THEN... WE'D BETTER GET STARTED. EVERY SECOND WE DELAY, THAT DOME GROWS LARGER.
AND WE CANNOT EVEN *GUESS* WHAT'S HAPPENING INSIDE.
READY WHEN YOU ARE, REED. BUT HOW DO WE GET *THROUGH* THAT BARRIER?
DO WE USE IRON MAN'S GADGET-- OR WILL THAT SPEED UP THE GROWTH OF THE DOME?
NO. I DON'T THINK IT WAS ANYTHING IRON MAN DID THAT TRIGGERED THIS EXPANSION.
SOMEHOW I SUSPECT THIS IS ALL PART OF THE NATURAL FUNCTIONING OF THE DOME.
SO, ALL WE NEED DO IS ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE *INGESTED*, AS SHE-HULK WAS.
READY, YOU TWO?
TWO?!?

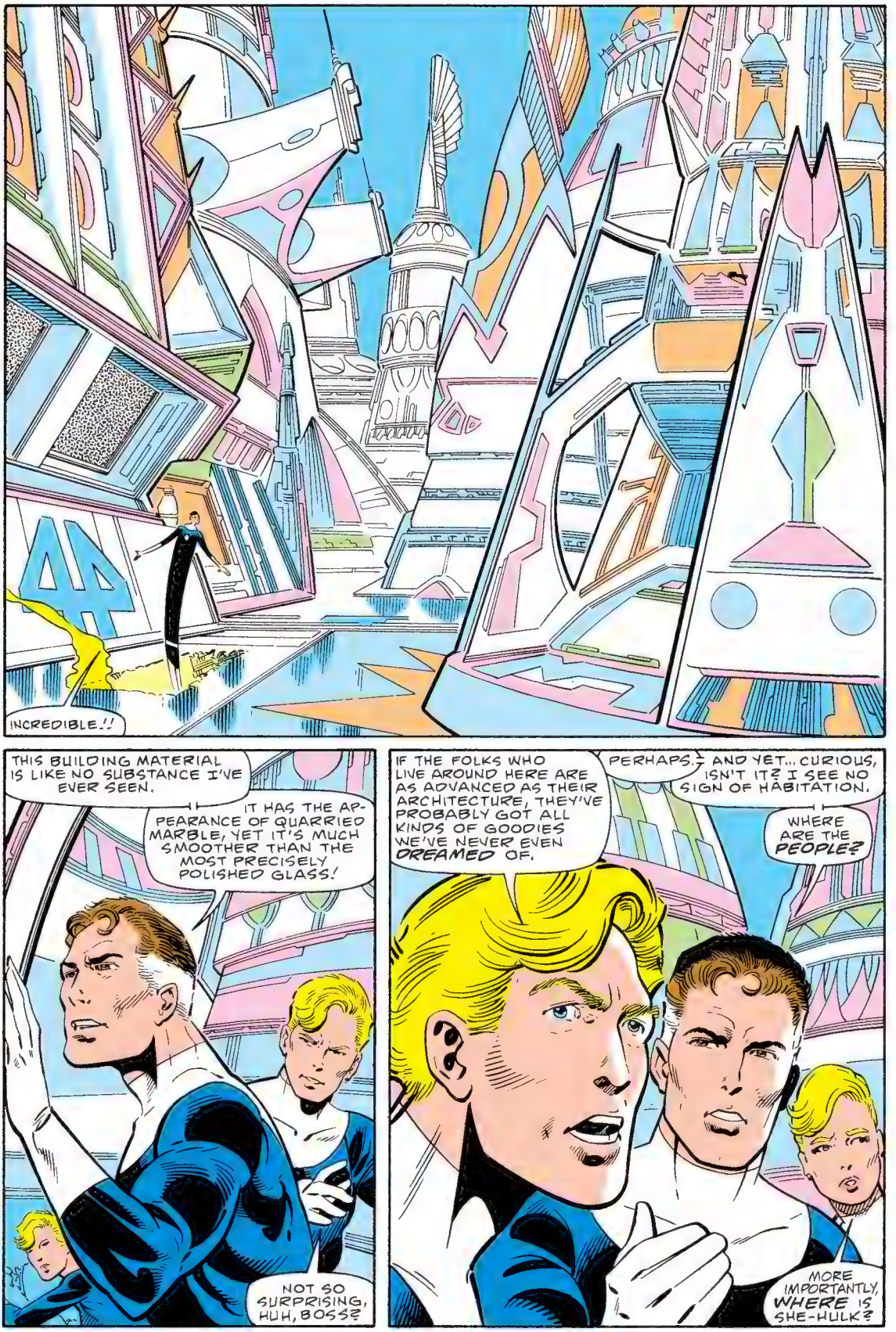

BETTER MAKE THAT "THREE," REED. I'M COMING WITH YOU.
WYATT?
HEY, C'MON, PAL. IT'S GONNA BE DANGEROUS IN THERE. WE CAN'T LET YOU GET SMUSHED PLAYIN' HERO.
I'M NOT PLAYING ANYTHING, JOHNNY. YOU SAID YOURSELF THAT SHE-HULK AND I HAVE BEEN ...MORE THAN FRIENDS.
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HER. AND I WANT TO KNOW NOW.
EITHER I COME WITH YOU, OR I FOLLOW ON MY OWN.
VERY WELL, WYATT, YOU'VE PROVEN YOURSELF CAPABLE OF HANDLING DANGEROUS SITUATIONS IN THE PAST.
YOU CAN COME.
BUT, TIGRA, I THINK YOU...
I KNOW, I KNOW.
I HAVE TO WAIT AROUND 'TIL THE AVENGERS GET BACK, SO I CAN BRIEF 'EM.
Sheesh! SOME DAYS I WONDER WHY I BOTHERED TO GET OUT OF MY KITTY BASKET.

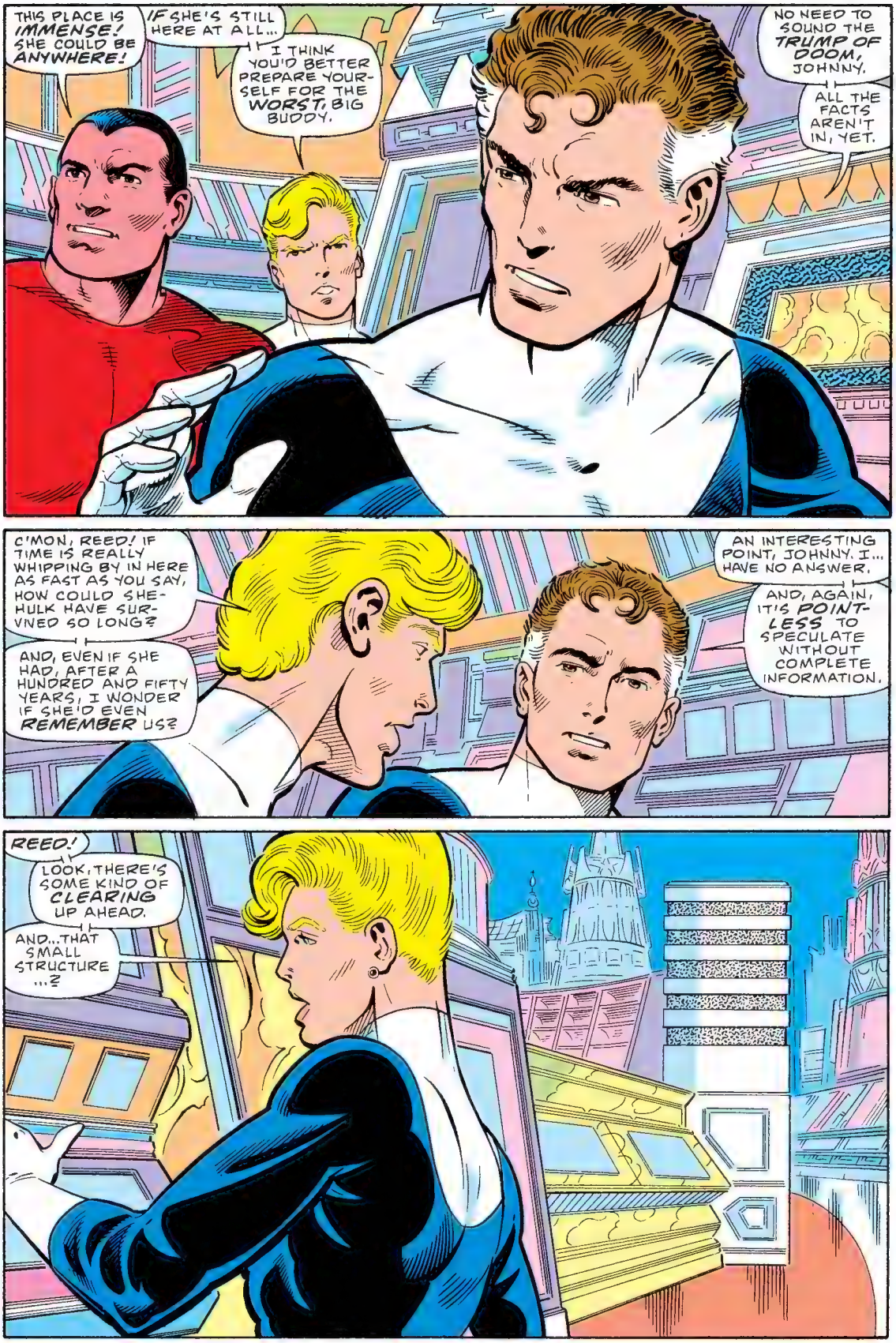
HAVE FUN, GUYS.
DROP ME A POSTCARD, IF YOU GET THE CHANCE.
OKAY, PEOPLE, GRAB AHOLD...
AND DON'T LET GO!
IT'S VITAL WE PENETRATE THE INTERFACE AS A UNIT!
THERE THEY GO! THE DOME'S GOT AHOLD OF 'EM, JUST LIKE SHE-HULK.
ANY SECOND NOW, AND THEY'LL BE...
WAIT A MINUTE...
IS IT MY IMAGINATION, OR IS SOMETHING HAPPENING TO THE DOME...?
OH, MY HEAVENS..!!
NO!!


BUT TIGRA'S SUDDEN CRY GOES UNHEARD, AS...
OOOOhh!
THAT WAS SOME RIDE! WHERE... WHERE ARE WE, REED?
I CAN'T BEGIN TO GUESS IN THIS DARK-NESS.
JOHNNY, CAN YOU HELP US OUT?
YEAH...
SURE THING, BROTHER-IN-LAW! I CAN AL-WAYS SHED A LITTLE LIGHT ON THE...
...subject...??

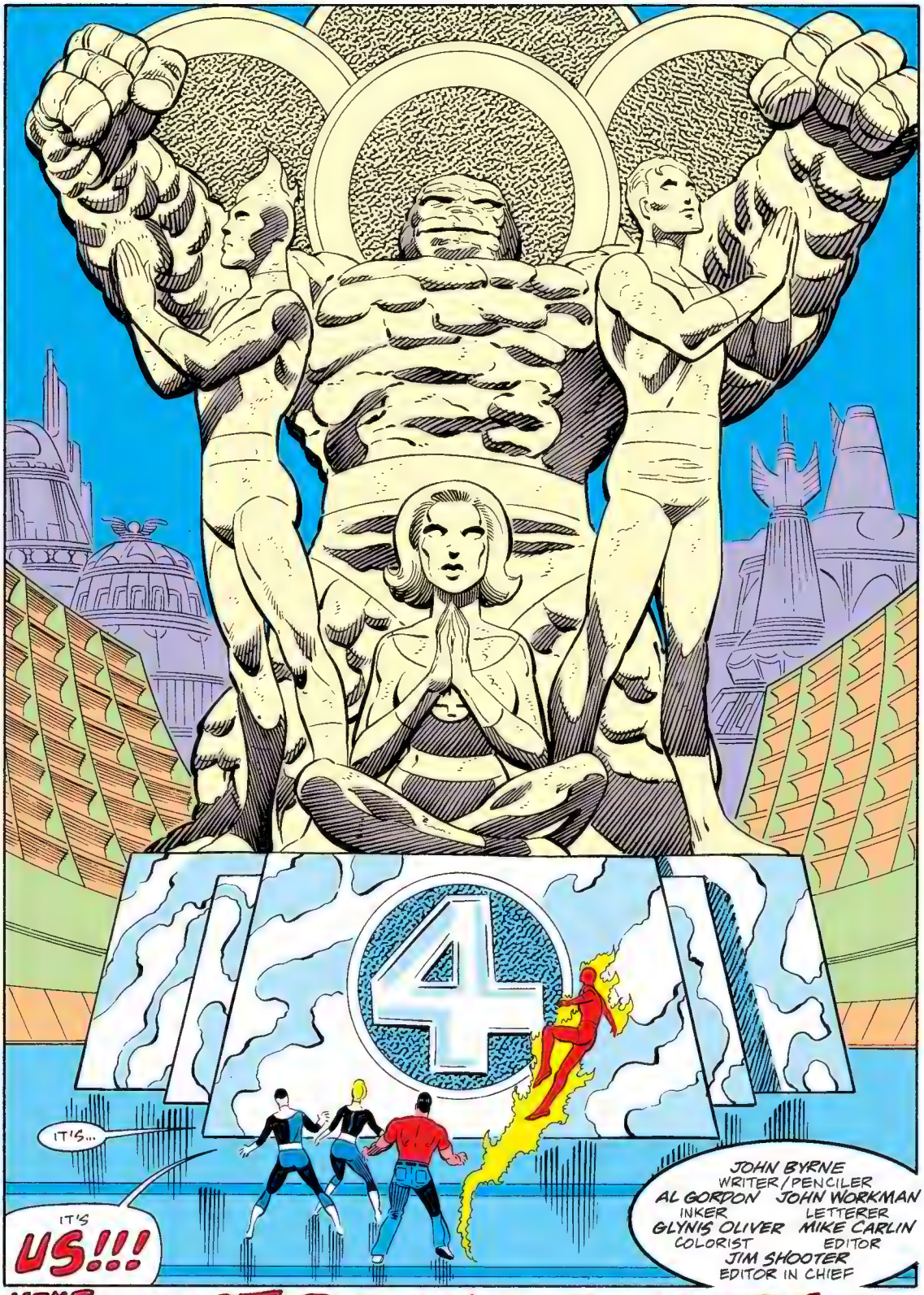

BRAUN'S
PHOTO SUPPLY
WHAT... WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
IT'S...
REED! IT'S THE OUTSKIRTS OF CENTRAL CITY!
I USED TO DRIVE ALONG THIS ROAD ON THE WAY TO YOUR OLD ROCKET BASE!
YOU'RE RIGHT, SUE! BUT THE ORIGINAL STRUCTURES HAVE BEEN HEAVILY BUILT OVER!

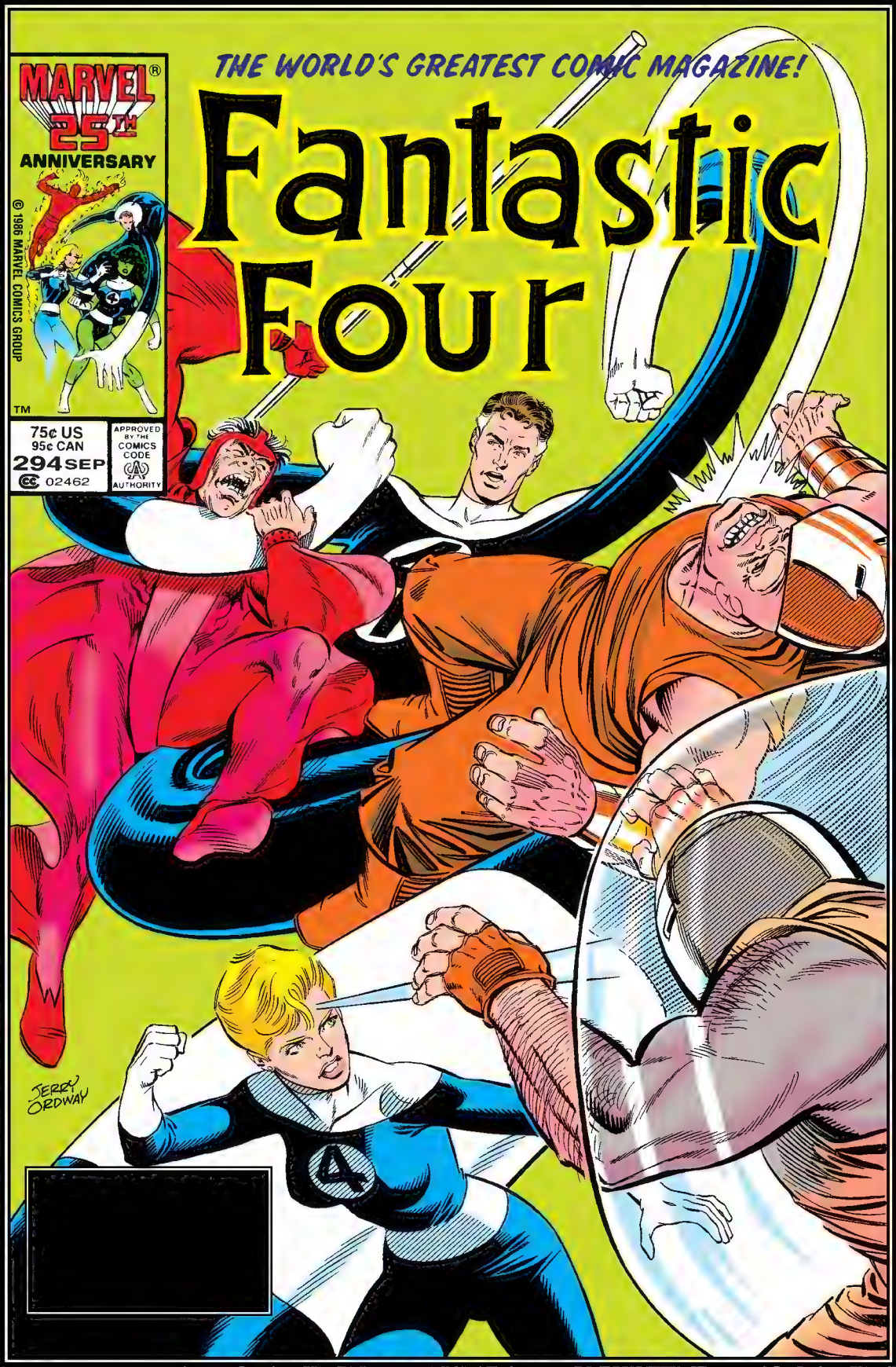

OF COURSE! IF THE ESTIMATED AMOUNT OF TIME HAS REALLY PASSED WITHIN THE BARRIER...
AND THE INHABITANTS CONTINUED TO BUILD AT A NORMAL RATE, THEY'D SOON HAVE FILLED UP THE INTERIOR OF THE DOME!
THEN... THEN YOU FEEL THERE MAY STILL BE PEOPLE HERE? EVEN THOUGH THIS AREA LOOKS SO DILAPIDATED?
IT LOOKS AS IF NO ONE HAS LIVED HERE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS!
IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, NO ONE HAS! THEY'D HAVE BEEN FORCED TO MOVE HIGHER AS THE CONSTRUCTION FILLED THE DOME.
SUE...
WAY AHEAD OF YOU THIS TIME, REED. WE NEED TO GET TO THE UPPER LEVELS OF THIS PLACE...
...AND SINCE THE TORCH IS THE ONLY ONE OF US WHO CAN FLY...
...IT'S UP TO THE INVISIBLE WOMAN TO GENERATE A FORCE-FIELD STAIRWAY FOR THE REST OF YOU TO CLIMB!
GOOD, SUE! NOW IT'S YOUR TURN, JOHNNY!
RIGHT! MY FLAME POWER CAN SLICE THROUGH THIS STUFF EASILY!
WHOA!
LOOK OUT BELOW! FALLIN' HOT STUFF!
CAREFUL, JOHNNY! HOLD BACK, WHILE I TAKE A LOOK!


INCREDIBLE!!
THIS BUILDING MATERIAL IS LIKE NO SUBSTANCE I'VE EVER SEEN.
IT HAS THE APPEARANCE OF QUARRIED MARBLE, YET IT'S MUCH SMOOTHER THAN THE MOST PRECISELY POLISHED GLASS!
NOT SO SURPRISING, HUH, BOSS?
IF THE FOLKS WHO LIVE AROUND HERE ARE AS ADVANCED AS THEIR ARCHITECTURE, THEY'VE PROBABLY GOT ALL KINDS OF GOODIES WE'VE NEVER EVEN *DREAMED* OF.
PERHAPS. AND YET... CURIOUS, ISN'T IT? I SEE NO SIGN OF HABITATION.
WHERE ARE THE *PEOPLE?*
MORE IMPORTANTLY, *WHERE* IS SHE-HULK?


THIS PLACE IS IMMENSE! SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE!
IF SHE'S STILL HERE AT ALL...
I THINK YOU'D BETTER PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE WORST, BIG BUDDY.
NO NEED TO SOUND THE TRUMP OF DOOM, JOHNNY.
ALL THE FACTS AREN'T IN, YET.
C'MON, REED! IF TIME IS REALLY WHIPPING BY IN HERE AS FAST AS YOU SAY, HOW COULD SHE-HULK HAVE SURVIVED SO LONG?
AND, EVEN IF SHE HAD, AFTER A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS, I WONDER IF SHE'D EVEN REMEMBER US?
AN INTERESTING POINT, JOHNNY. I... HAVE NO ANSWER.
AND, AGAIN, IT'S POINTLESS TO SPECULATE WITHOUT COMPLETE INFORMATION.
REED!
LOOK, THERE'S SOME KIND OF CLEARING UP AHEAD.
AND...THAT SMALL STRUCTURE ...?

AMAZING!! IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SWEAR THIS WAS A STYLIZED REPRESENTATION OF OUR OLD HEADQUARTERS...
...THE BAXTER BUILDING!
AND LOOK!
THERE'S ANOTHER ONE JUST OVER HERE!
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE GATE-POSTS OR SOME...
...THING...
OMI-GOSH!
JOHNNY? WHAT IS IT, LAD?
S-SEE FOR YOURSELF, FEARLESS LEADER!


IT'S...
IT'S US!!!
JOHN BYRNE
WRITER/PENCILER
AL GORDON
INKER
JOHN WORKMAN
LETTERER
GLYNIS OLIVER
COLORIST
MIKE CARLIN
EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR IN CHIEF
NEXT ISSUE:
A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO THE WORDS...
HERO-WORSHIP!
ALL IN 30 DAYS!


THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
Fantastic Four
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JERRY ORDWAY

Stan Lee PRESENTS:
THE Fantastic Four
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN CENTRAL CITY, CALIFORNIA-- THREE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE FABULOUS FANTASTIC FOUR, AND THEIR FRIEND WYATT WINGFOOT, HAVE MADE A SHOCKING DISCOVERY...
I WAS PREPARED FOR VIRTUALLY ANYTHING... BUT I NEVER EXPECTED SOMETHING LIKE THIS!
REED, WHAT DOES IT MEAN? WHY WOULD ANYONE HAVE BUILT STATUES LIKE THESE?
I SUSPECT THAT THEY ARE MORE THAN JUST STATUES, SUE.
THEY'RE JUST STANDING THERE-- AS IF THEY'RE WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN!
THE WAY THE SCULPTURES HAVE BEEN PLACED IN THIS PLAZA, IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY MUST BE SOME SORT OF TOTEMS... PART OF A SHRINE!
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING, WYATT! I MEAN, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT ONE HECKUVA FAN CLUB HERE, BUT--

HERO WORSHIP

"YOUR EYES SHALL BE OPENED, AND YE SHALL BE AS GODS, KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL."
--GENESIS, CHAPTER 3, VERSE 5

--WHY WOULD ANYBODY BUILD A SHRINE TO US?

JOHN BYRNE-PLOTTER
ROGER STERN-SCRIPTER
JERRY ORDWAY-PENCILER
AL GORDON-INKER
JOHN WORKMAN-LETTERER
GLYNIS OLIVER-COLORIST
MICHAEL CARLIN-EDITOR

JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I DON'T KNOW, JOHNNY, BUT I GET THE FEELING IT WAS BUILT A LONG TIME AGO.

THEN HOWCUM WE NEVER HEARD ABOUT IT BEFORE?

BECAUSE OF THE CHRONAL ACCELERATION, TORCH! HUNDREDS OF YEARS ELAPSE WITHIN CENTRAL CITY FOR EVERY HOUR THAT PASSES OUTSIDE!

WHEN DID YOU SAY THIS ALL STARTED, WYATT?

LESS THAN A DAY AND A HALF AGO, SUE, THAT'S APPARENTLY WHEN THE IMMENSE DOME SUDDENLY ENVELOPED THE CITY, CUTTING OFF ALL COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

CIVIL AUTHORITIES SEALED OFF THE AREA AROUND THE DOME, AND KEPT THINGS HUSHED UP. BUT THEY SOON REALIZED THIS WAS TOO BIG FOR THEM TO HANDLE--

"--AND CALLED ON THE CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF THE AVENGERS FOR HELP.

"THE SHE-HULK HAD BEEN VISITING AT THE AVENGERS' WEST COAST COMPOUND*--AND WAS WITH THEM WHEN IRON MAN MANAGED TO PENETRATE THE DOME.

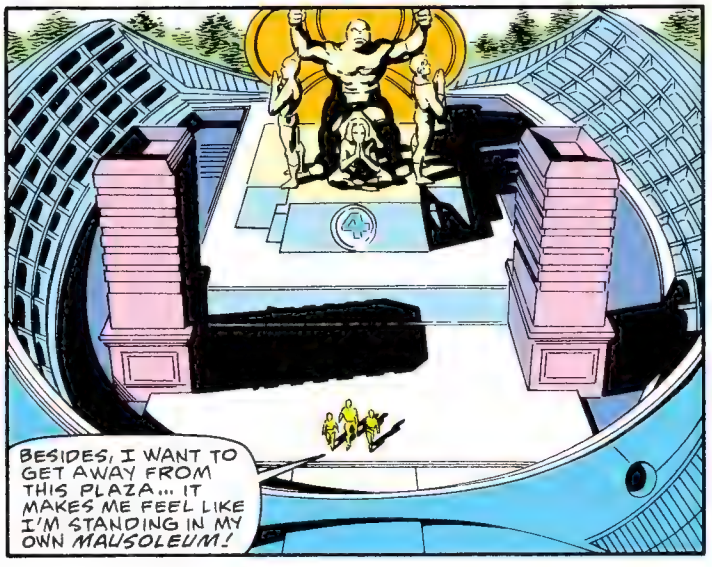
*IN ADDITION TO BEING A MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR, THE SHE-HULK IS ALSO AN AVENGERS RESERVIST.

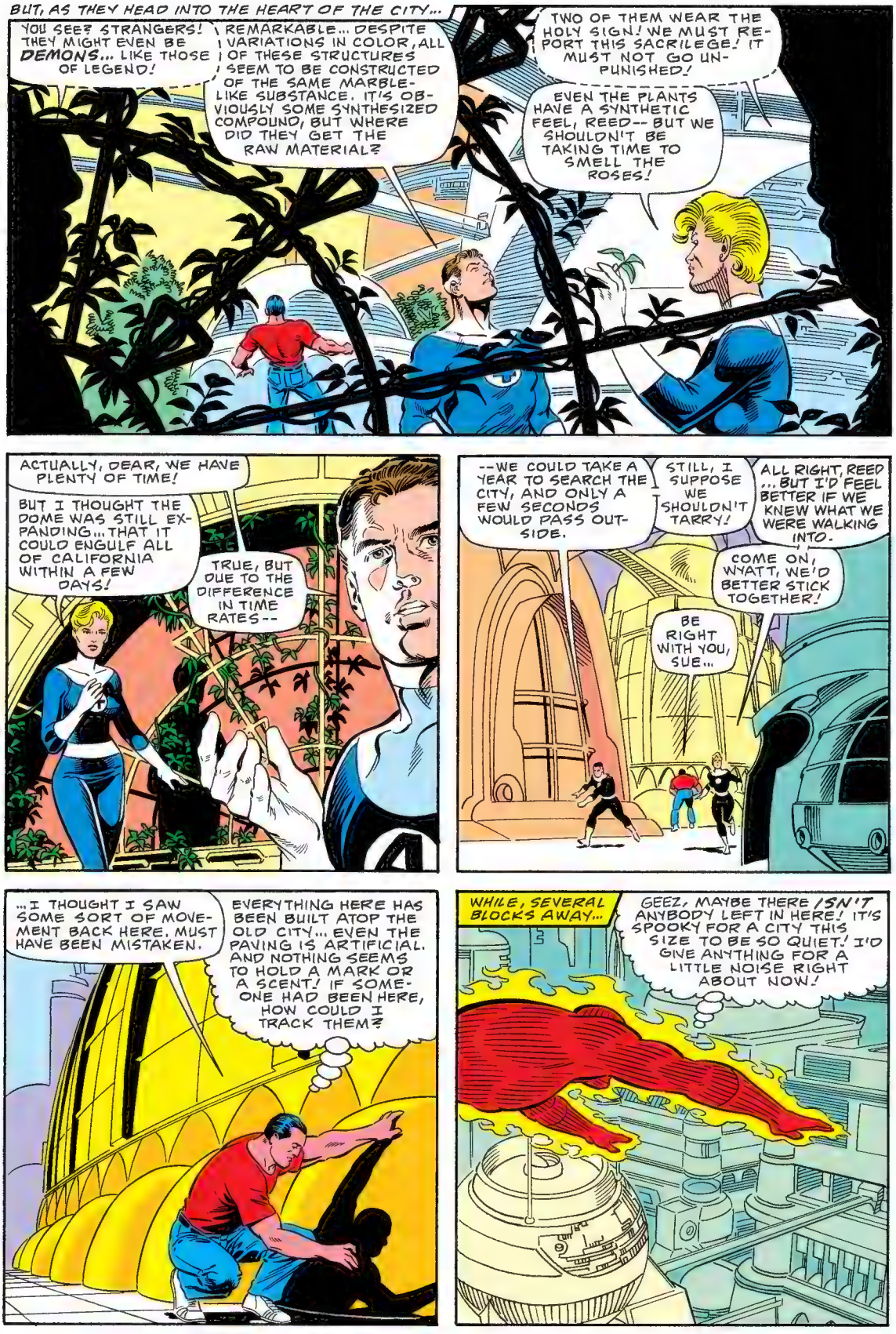
"THE SURPRISE CAME WHEN IRON MAN BLASTED BACK OUT OF THE DOME, BARELY A SPLIT-SECOND AFTER HE'D ENTERED!
"FROM WHAT TIGRA SAID, HIS ARMOR LOOKED AS THOUGH HE'D COME THROUGH A WAR! AND HE CLAIMED THAT HE'D SPENT THREE WEEKS WITHIN THE DOME!
"WONDER MAN WHISKED HIM AWAY TO ADMINISTER FIRST AID.
"AND THAT'S WHEN THE DOME BEGAN TO EXPAND..."
HEY!! IT'S GRABBED ME!
"JENNIFER--THE SHE-HULK--WAS QUICKLY DRAWN INTO THE ZONE OF DARKNESS! BY THE TIME WE ARRIVED, AND THEN BREACHED THE DOME, NEARLY HALF-AN-HOUR HAD PASSED."
IN HERE, I'M AFRAID THAT'S THE EQUIVALENT OF 150 YEARS.
BUT THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN WE'VE LOST HER, WYATT!
YOU REALLY THINK THERE'S A CHANCE SHE'S STILL ALIVE?
GIVEN HER SUPERIOR PHYSIOLOGY, SUCH A LIFE SPAN... WELL, IT'S AT LEAST NOT OUT OF THE QUESTION!
AND IF MY BRAINY BROTHER-IN-LAW SAYS IT'S POSSIBLE, PAL, THEN IT'S POSSIBLE! BELIEVE IT!

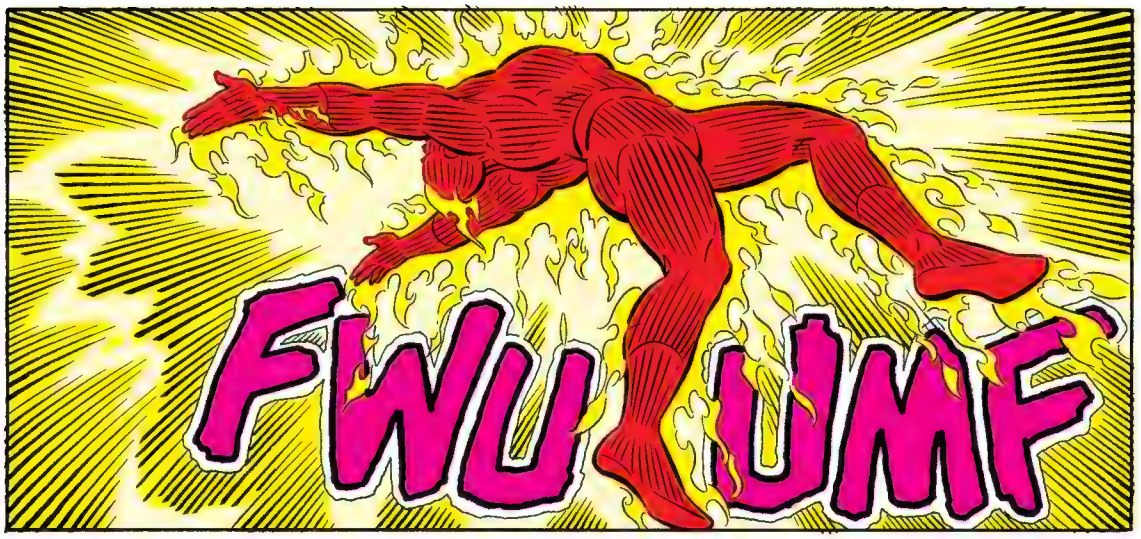
WYATT, I KNOW YOU AND JENNIFER HAVE BEEN CLOSE. IT'S NOT RIGHT FOR US TO GIVE YOU FALSE HOPES, BUT YOU SHOULDN'T ABANDON HOPE EITHER!
I DON'T WANT TO, SUE, BUT THE FACT REMAINS...
...WE HAVEN'T SEEN A SINGLE LIVING SOUL SINCE WE CAME IN HERE!

WHAT THE HECK DOES THAT PROVE? SO WE HAVEN'T SEEN ANYBODY... BIG DEAL! MAYBE WE HAVEN'T LOOKED HARD ENOUGH!
SOMEBODY'S GOTTA LIVE AROUND HERE! YOU DON'T HAVE A SHRINE WITHOUT WORSHIPERS, RIGHT? I SAY, LET'S SCARE UP THE CONGREGATION AND FIND OUT WHO RUNS THIS PLACE!
C'MON! I'LL TAKE THE HIGH ROAD--!
ALL RIGHT, JOHNNY... BUT REMEMBER, IRON MAN WAS ATTACKED IN HERE EARLIER BY SOMETHING WITH ENOUGH POWER TO HEAVILY DAMAGE HIS ARMOR! BE ON YOUR GUARD!
HEY, AREN'T I ALWAYS?

IF YOU SPOT ANYTHING THAT LOOKS AS THOUGH IT'S GENERATING THE DOME--ANYTHING AT ALL--INFORM ME AT ONCE!
LET'S GO, HONEY...
...WE SHOULD START SEARCHING OURSELVES!


BESIDES, I WANT TO GET AWAY FROM THIS PLAZA... IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M STANDING IN MY OWN MAUSOLEUM!


BUT, AS THEY HEAD INTO THE HEART OF THE CITY...
YOU SEE? STRANGERS! THEY MIGHT EVEN BE DEMONS... LIKE THOSE OF LEGEND!
REMARKABLE... DESPITE VARIATIONS IN COLOR, ALL OF THESE STRUCTURES SEEM TO BE CONSTRUCTED OF THE SAME MARBLE-LIKE SUBSTANCE. IT'S OBVIOUSLY SOME SYNTHESIZED COMPOUND, BUT WHERE DID THEY GET THE RAW MATERIAL?
TWO OF THEM WEAR THE HOLY SIGN! WE MUST REPORT THIS SACRILEGE! IT MUST NOT GO UNPUNISHED!
EVEN THE PLANTS HAVE A SYNTHETIC FEEL, REED-- BUT WE SHOULDN'T BE TAKING TIME TO SMELL THE ROSES!
ACTUALLY, DEAR, WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME!
BUT I THOUGHT THE DOME WAS STILL EXPANDING... THAT IT COULD ENGULF ALL OF CALIFORNIA WITHIN A FEW DAYS!
TRUE, BUT DUE TO THE DIFFERENCE IN TIME RATES--
--WE COULD TAKE A YEAR TO SEARCH THE CITY, AND ONLY A FEW SECONDS WOULD PASS OUTSIDE.
STILL, I SUPPOSE WE SHOULDN'T TARRY!
ALL RIGHT, REED ... BUT I'D FEEL BETTER IF WE KNEW WHAT WE WERE WALKING INTO.
COME ON, WYATT, WE'D BETTER STICK TOGETHER!
BE RIGHT WITH YOU, SUE...
...I THOUGHT I SAW SOME SORT OF MOVEMENT BACK HERE. MUST HAVE BEEN MISTAKEN.
EVERYTHING HERE HAS BEEN BUILT ATOP THE OLD CITY... EVEN THE PAVING IS ARTIFICIAL. AND NOTHING SEEMS TO HOLD A MARK OR A SCENT! IF SOMEONE HAD BEEN HERE, HOW COULD I TRACK THEM?
WHILE, SEVERAL BLOCKS AWAY...
GEEZ, MAYBE THERE ISN'T ANYBODY LEFT IN HERE! IT'S SPOOKY FOR A CITY THIS SIZE TO BE SO QUIET. I'D GIVE ANYTHING FOR A LITTLE NOISE RIGHT ABOUT NOW!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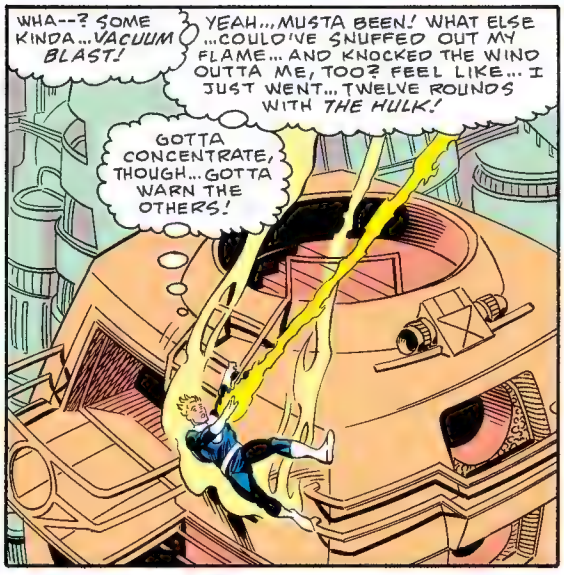
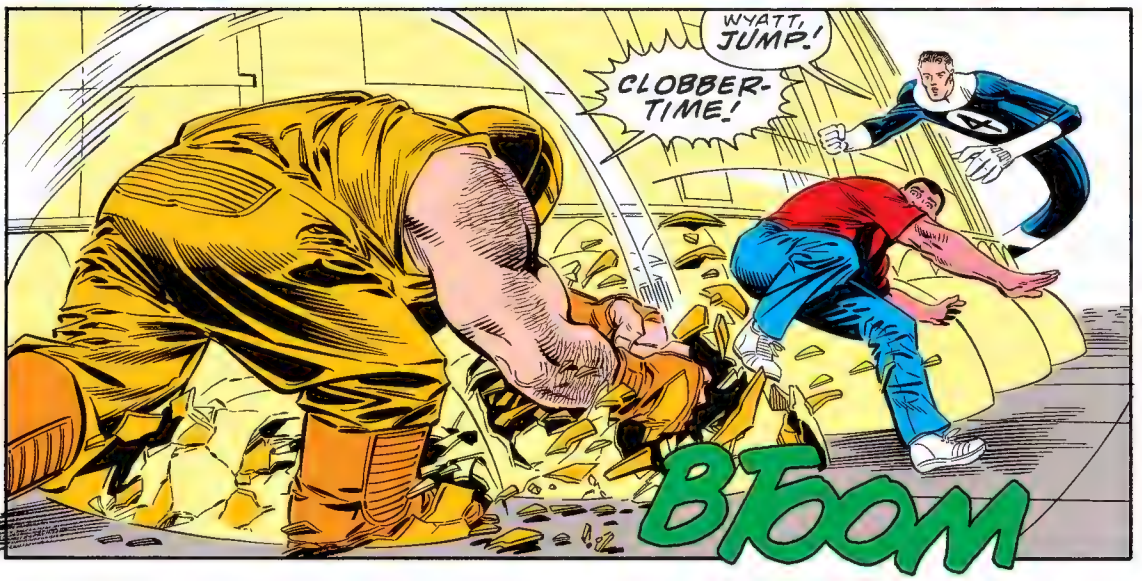
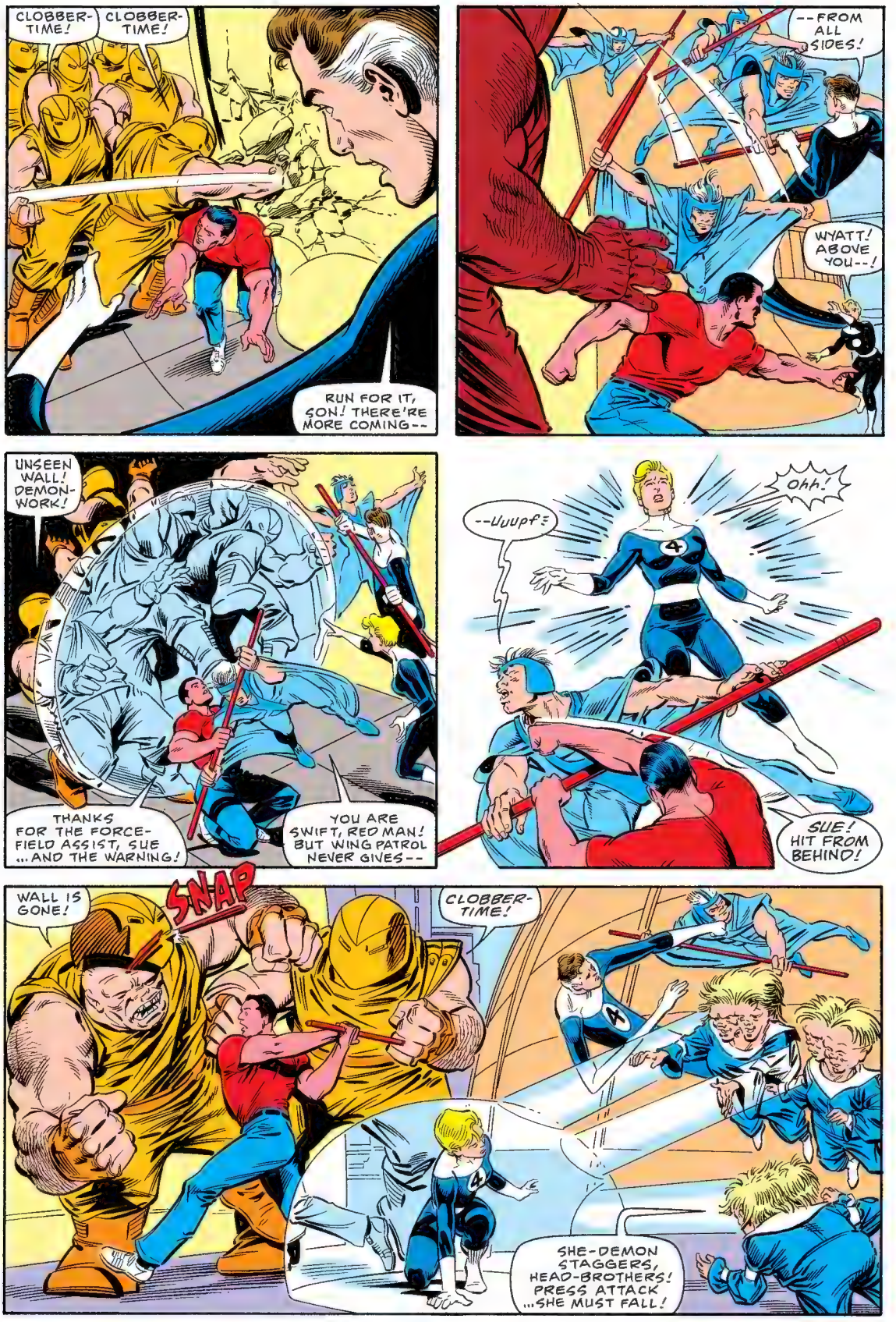
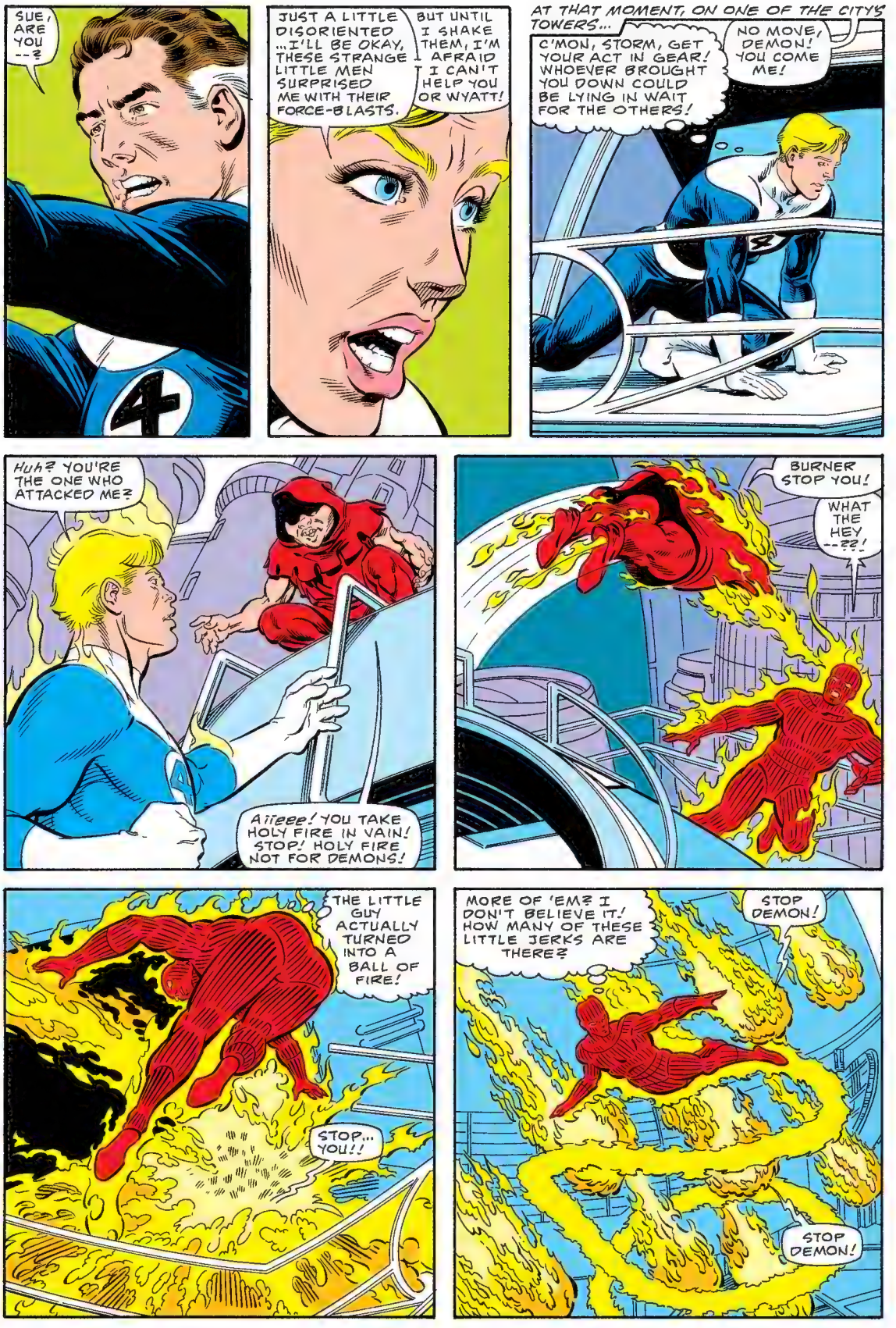
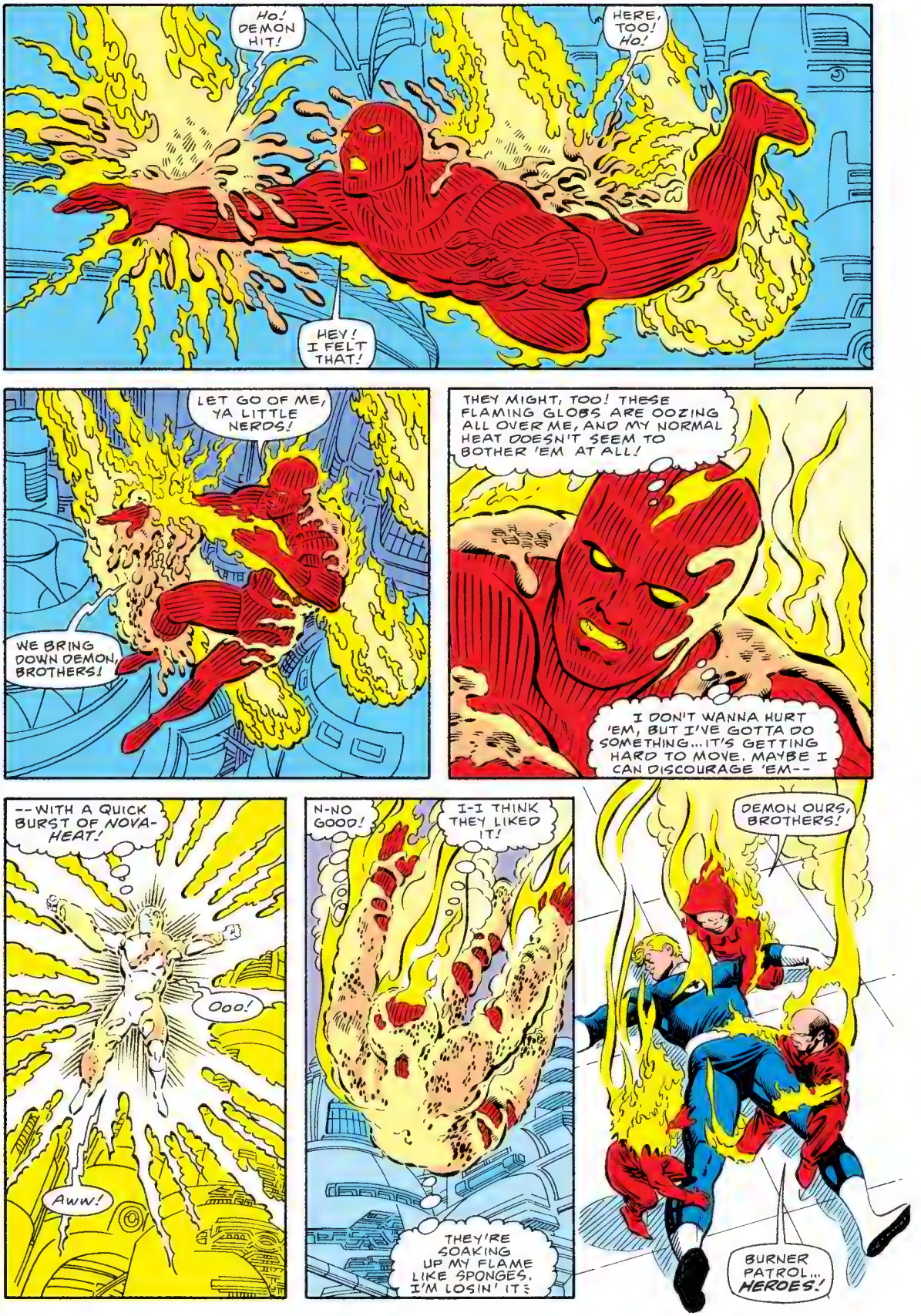

WHA--? SOME KINDA...VACUUM BLAST!
YEAH...MUSTA BEEN! WHAT ELSE ...COULD'VE SNUFFED OUT MY FLAME... AND KNOCKED THE WIND OUTTA ME, TOO? FEEL LIKE... I JUST WENT...TWELVE ROUNDS WITH THE HULK!
GOTTA CONCENTRATE, THOUGH...GOTTA WARN THE OTHERS!

REED! SUE! LOOK, IT'S JOHNNY'S EMERGENCY FLARE!
WE SEE IT, WYATT! WE'D BETTER--!

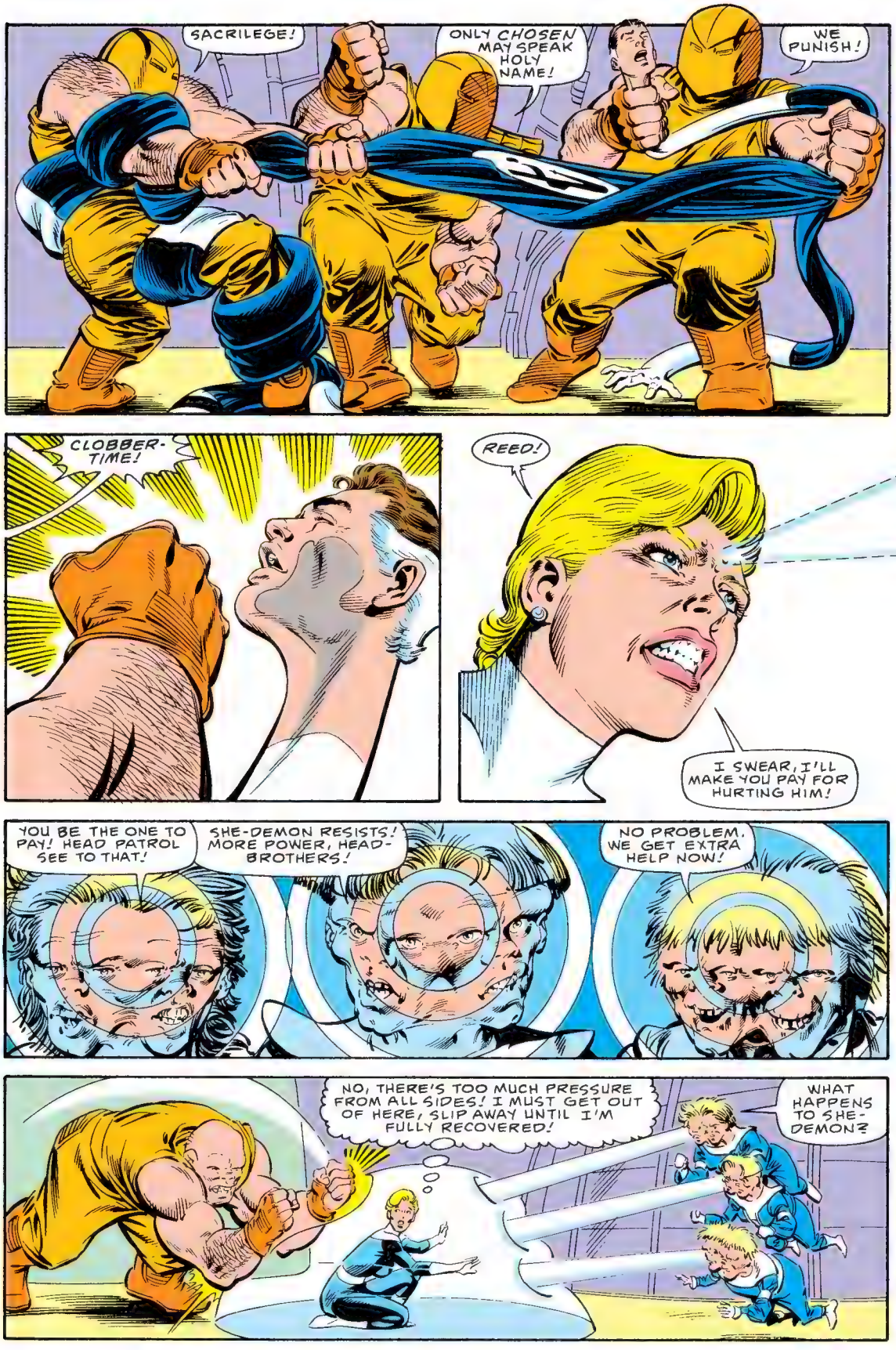

WYATT, JUMP!
CLOBBER-TIME!
BOOM


CLOBBER-TIME!
CLOBBER-TIME!
RUN FOR IT, SON! THERE'RE MORE COMING--
--FROM ALL SIDES!
WYATT! ABOVE YOU--!
UNSEEN WALL! DEMON-WORK!
THANKS FOR THE FORCE-FIELD ASSIST, SUE ...AND THE WARNING!
YOU ARE SWIFT, RED MAN! BUT WING PATROL NEVER GIVES--
--Uuupf=
OHH!
SUE! HIT FROM BEHIND!
WALL IS GONE!
SNAP
CLOBBER-TIME!
SHE-DEMON STAGGERS, HEAD-BROTHERS! PRESS ATTACK ...SHE MUST FALL!


SUE, ARE YOU --?
JUST A LITTLE DISORIENTED ...I'LL BE OKAY, THESE STRANGE LITTLE MEN SURPRISED ME WITH THEIR FORCE-BLASTS.
BUT UNTIL I SHAKE THEM, I'M AFRAID I CAN'T HELP YOU OR WYATT!
AT THAT MOMENT, ON ONE OF THE CITY'S TOWERS...
C'MON, STORM, GET YOUR ACT IN GEAR! WHOEVER BROUGHT YOU DOWN COULD BE LYING IN WAIT FOR THE OTHERS!
NO MOVE, DEMON! YOU COME ME!
Huh? YOU'RE THE ONE WHO ATTACKED ME?
Aiieee! YOU TAKE HOLY FIRE IN VAIN! STOP! HOLY FIRE NOT FOR DEMONS!
BURNER STOP YOU!
WHAT THE HEY --??!
THE LITTLE GUY ACTUALLY TURNED INTO A BALL OF FIRE!
STOP... YOU!!
MORE OF 'EM? I DON'T BELIEVE IT! HOW MANY OF THESE LITTLE JERKS ARE THERE?
STOP DEMON!
STOP DEMON!


HO! DEMON HIT!
HERE, TOO! HO!
HEY! I FELT THAT!
LET GO OF ME, YA LITTLE NERDS!
WE BRING DOWN DEMON, BROTHERS!
THEY MIGHT, TOO! THESE FLAMING GLOBS ARE OOZING ALL OVER ME, AND MY NORMAL HEAT DOESN'T SEEM TO BOTHER 'EM AT ALL!
I DON'T WANNA HURT 'EM, BUT I'VE GOTTA DO SOMETHING... IT'S GETTING HARD TO MOVE. MAYBE I CAN DISCOURAGE 'EM--
--WITH A QUICK BURST OF NOVA-HEAT!
Ooo!
Aww!
N-NO GOOD!
I-I THINK THEY LIKED IT!
THEY'RE SOAKING UP MY FLAME LIKE SPONGES. I'M LOSIN' IT!
DEMON OURS, BROTHERS!
BURNER PATROL... HEROES!

MEANWHILE, UNAWARE OF THE TORCH'S PLIGHT...
THESE WARRIORS APPEAR TO BE OF THREE DISTINCT HUMAN SUB-SPECIES. COULD A FEW THOUSAND YEARS OF IN-BREEDING HAVE CAUSED THIS, OR ARE THEY THE RESULT OF SOME GENETIC CONTROL PROGRAM?
LET'S SAVE THE SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY FOR LATER, DR. RICHARDS!
WYATT! BEHIND YOU!
THE BIG ONES ARE STARTING TO USE A LITTLE STEALTH!
WATCH IT, REED! YOU'RE LEAVING YOURSELF OPEN TO THE OTHER ONE!
WUNK
A DEMON SHOWING CONCERN! TOUCHING... BUT STUPID!
WING PATROL SCORES!
THAT WAS A SERIOUS TACTICAL ERROR. I SAVED WYATT FROM ONE THREAT, BUT DISTRACTED HIM FROM ANOTHER ... AND LET MY OWN GUARD DOWN IN THE PROCESS!
Hah! CLOBBER-TIME!
IF YOU THINK YELLING THAT OVER AND OVER MAKES YOU ANYTHING MORE...
...THAN A SECOND-RATE THING, YOU'RE SADLY MISTAKEN!
THING? THING?!?
DEMON TAKES HOLY NAME IN VAIN!

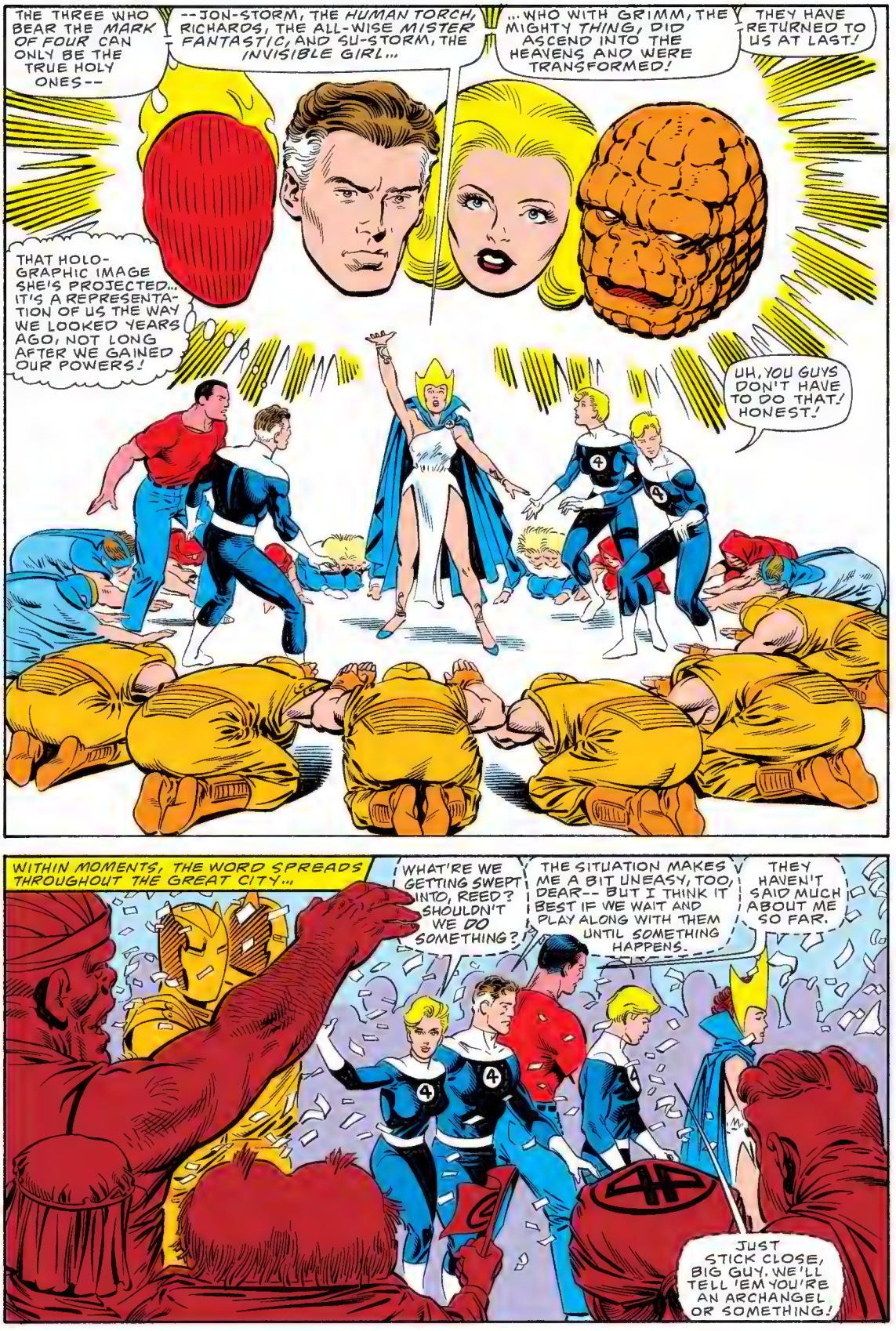

SACRILEGE!
ONLY CHOSEN MAY SPEAK HOLY NAME!
WE PUNISH!
CLOBBER-TIME!
REED!
I SWEAR, I'LL MAKE YOU PAY FOR HURTING HIM!
YOU BE THE ONE TO PAY! HEAD PATROL SEE TO THAT!
SHE-DEMON RESISTS! MORE POWER, HEAD-BROTHERS!
NO PROBLEM. WE GET EXTRA HELP NOW!
NO, THERE'S TOO MUCH PRESSURE FROM ALL SIDES! I MUST GET OUT OF HERE, SLIP AWAY UNTIL I'M FULLY RECOVERED!
WHAT HAPPENS TO SHE-DEMON?

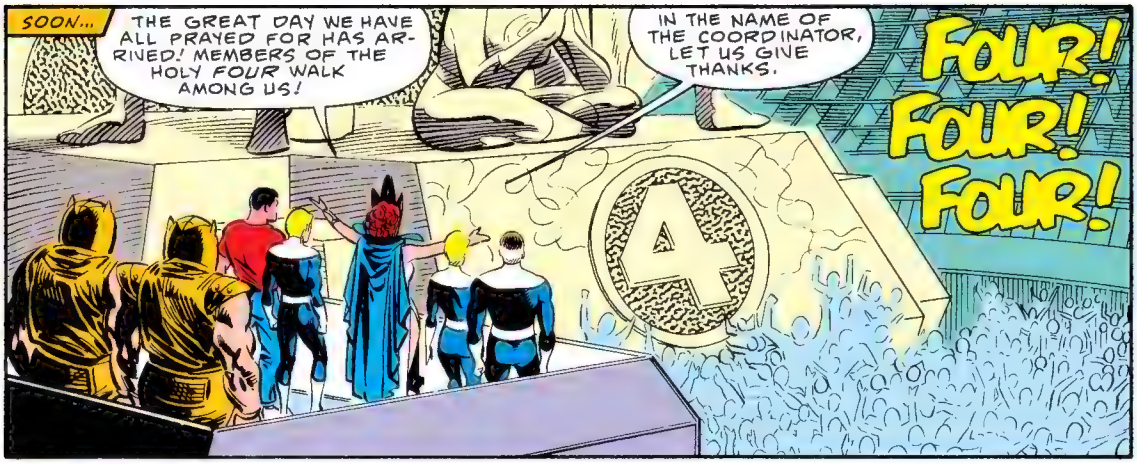
Uhn?! WHERE SHE GONE?
THANK HEAVENS, THEY DON'T HAVE ANY EXTRA-SENSORY POWERS FOR DETECTING THE *IN-VISIBLE!* NOW I CAN--!
HALT! ALL OF YOU!
WELL! I DON'T KNOW WHO *SHE* IS--

"--BUT SHE LOOKS LIKE SHE'S IN CHARGE!"
LET THE BATTLE CEASE! HEAD PATROL... WING PATROL... CLOBBER PATROL... BRING YOUR CAPTIVES FORWARD!
WHAT HAS TRANSPIRED HERE?

DEMONS INVADED HOLY PLACES, *PRIESTESS LIVIA*. WE STOP!
THERE'S BEEN A SERIOUS MISUNDERSTANDING. DESPITE OUR POWERS, WE'RE NO MORE DEMONS THAN YOU ARE!
WE'RE HERE TO FIND A LOST FRIEND AND CORRECT A DANGEROUS SITUATION!

BURNER PATROL STOP THIS ONE.
HEY, WATCH WHO YOU'RE SHOVING!
BY THE GREAT COORDINATOR, WHAT HAVE YOU ALL DONE? LOOK AT THESE STRANGERS! DO YOU NOT SEE THEM FOR WHO THEY ARE?


THE THREE WHO BEAR THE MARK OF FOUR CAN ONLY BE THE TRUE HOLY ONES--
--JON-STORM, THE HUMAN TORCH, RICHARDS, THE ALL-WISE MISTER FANTASTIC, AND SU-STORM, THE INVISIBLE GIRL...
...WHO WITH GRIMM, THE MIGHTY THING, DID ASCEND INTO THE HEAVENS AND WERE TRANSFORMED!
THEY HAVE RETURNED TO US AT LAST!
THAT HOLO-GRAPHIC IMAGE SHE'S PROJECTED... IT'S A REPRESENTA-TION OF US THE WAY WE LOOKED YEARS AGO, NOT LONG AFTER WE GAINED OUR POWERS!
UH, YOU GUYS DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT! HONEST!
WITHIN MOMENTS, THE WORD SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE GREAT CITY...
WHAT'RE WE GETTING SWEPT INTO, REED? SHOULDN'T WE DO SOMETHING?
THE SITUATION MAKES ME A BIT UNEASY, TOO, DEAR-- BUT I THINK IT BEST IF WE WAIT AND PLAY ALONG WITH THEM UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENS.
THEY HAVEN'T SAID MUCH ABOUT ME SO FAR.
JUST STICK CLOSE, BIG GUY. WE'LL TELL 'EM YOU'RE AN ARCHANGEL OR SOMETHING!

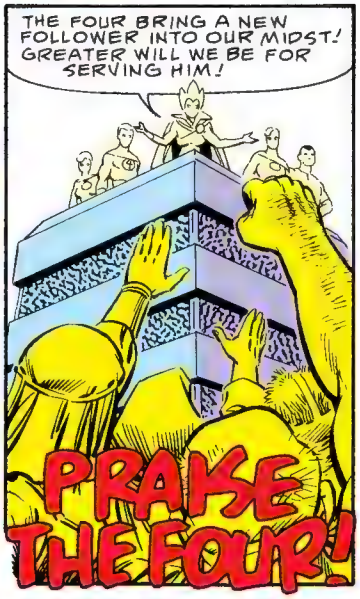

SOON...
THE GREAT DAY WE HAVE ALL PRAYED FOR HAS ARRIVED! MEMBERS OF THE HOLY FOUR WALK AMONG US!
IN THE NAME OF THE COORDINATOR, LET US GIVE THANKS.
FOUR! FOUR! FOUR!

THEY WILL HEAL THE WORLD, AND MAKE IT WHOLE!
PRAISE THE FOUR!

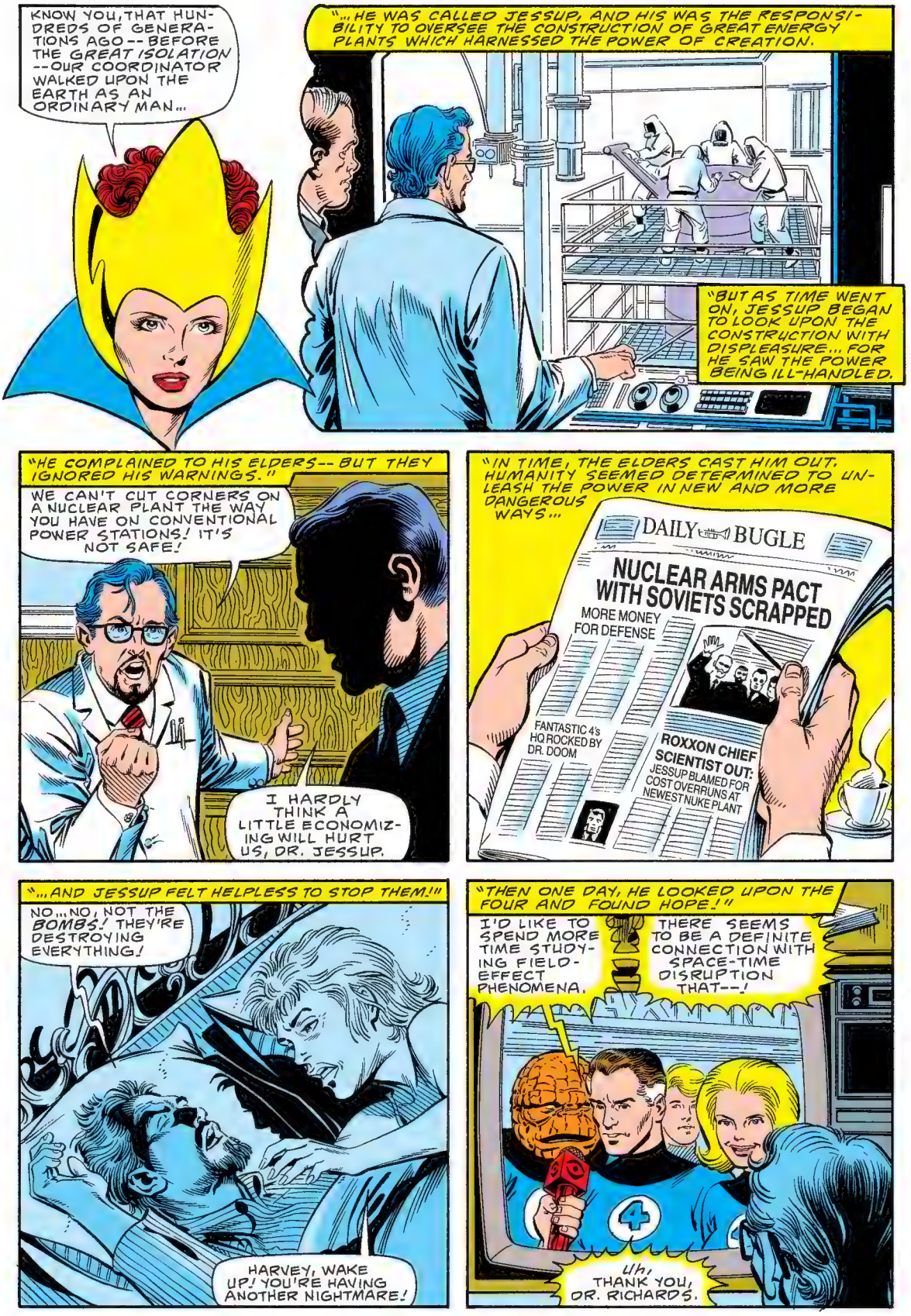
REED, WHAT HAVE WE GOTTEN OURSELVES INTO?
LIVIA... WE WILL, OF COURSE, HELP YOUR PEOPLE IN ANY WAY WE CAN. BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR HOW YOU CAME TO BE CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD.

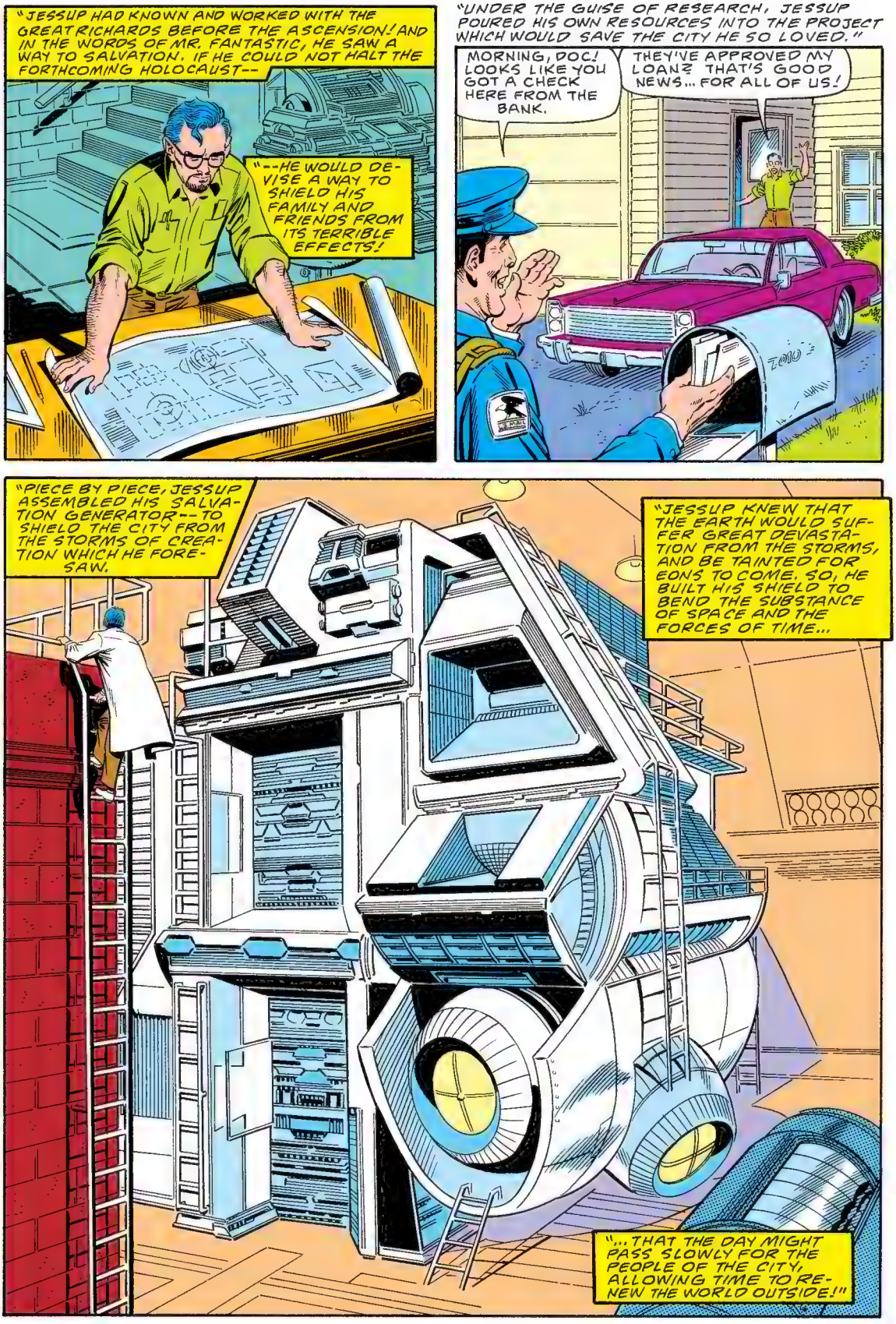
BUT SURELY, YOU MUST KNOW ALREADY! ARE YOU NOT RICHARDS THE ALL-KNOWING?

HE IS INDEED, PRIESTESS! Ah... BUT I AM A NEW FOLLOWER IN THE SERVICE OF THE FOUR, AND I AM FORBIDDEN TO HEAR THE STORY DIRECTLY FROM THEIR MOUTHS.
I SEE...

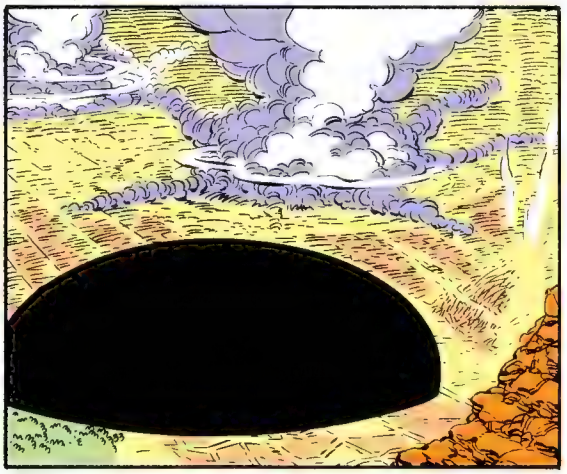

THE FOUR BRING A NEW FOLLOWER INTO OUR MIDST! GREATER WILL WE BE FOR SERVING HIM!
PRAISE THE FOUR!

DID YA HAVE TO LAY IT ON SO THICK, WYATT?
I HAD TO SELL IT, JOHNNY. I'M JUST GLAD I DIDN'T SLEEP THROUGH THAT COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS COURSE WE TOOK IN COLLEGE!


KNOW YOU, THAT HUNDREDS OF GENERATIONS AGO -- BEFORE THE GREAT ISOLATION -- OUR COORDINATOR WALKED UPON THE EARTH AS AN ORDINARY MAN...
"...HE WAS CALLED JESSUP, AND HIS WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO OVERSEE THE CONSTRUCTION OF GREAT ENERGY PLANTS WHICH HARNESSED THE POWER OF CREATION.
"BUT AS TIME WENT ON, JESSUP BEGAN TO LOOK UPON THE CONSTRUCTION WITH DISPLEASURE... FOR HE SAW THE POWER BEING ILL-HANDLED.
"HE COMPLAINED TO HIS ELDERS -- BUT THEY IGNORED HIS WARNINGS."
WE CAN'T CUT CORNERS ON A NUCLEAR PLANT THE WAY YOU HAVE ON CONVENTIONAL POWER STATIONS! IT'S NOT SAFE!
I HARDLY THINK A LITTLE ECONOMIZING WILL HURT US, DR. JESSUP.
"IN TIME, THE ELDERS CAST HIM OUT. HUMANITY SEEMED DETERMINED TO UNLEASH THE POWER IN NEW AND MORE DANGEROUS WAYS...
DAILY BUGLE
NUCLEAR ARMS PACT WITH SOVIETS SCRAPPED
MORE MONEY FOR DEFENSE
FANTASTIC 4's HQ ROCKED BY DR. DOOM
ROXXON CHIEF SCIENTIST OUT: JESSUP BLAMED FOR COST OVERRUNS AT NEWEST NUKE PLANT
"...AND JESSUP FELT HELPLESS TO STOP THEM!"
NO...NO, NOT THE BOMBS! THEY'RE DESTROYING EVERYTHING!
HARVEY, WAKE UP! YOU'RE HAVING ANOTHER NIGHTMARE!
"THEN ONE DAY, HE LOOKED UPON THE FOUR AND FOUND HOPE!"
I'D LIKE TO SPEND MORE TIME STUDYING FIELD-EFFECT PHENOMENA.
THERE SEEMS TO BE A DEFINITE CONNECTION WITH SPACE-TIME DISRUPTION THAT--!
UH, THANK YOU, DR. RICHARDS.


"JESSUP HAD KNOWN AND WORKED WITH THE GREAT RICHARDS BEFORE THE ASCENSION! AND IN THE WORDS OF MR. FANTASTIC, HE SAW A WAY TO SALVATION. IF HE COULD NOT HALT THE FORTHCOMING HOLOCAUST--
"--HE WOULD DEVISE A WAY TO SHIELD HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS FROM ITS TERRIBLE EFFECTS!
"UNDER THE GUISE OF RESEARCH, JESSUP POURED HIS OWN RESOURCES INTO THE PROJECT WHICH WOULD SAVE THE CITY HE SO LOVED."
MORNING, DOC! LOOKS LIKE YOU GOT A CHECK HERE FROM THE BANK.
THEY'VE APPROVED MY LOAN? THAT'S GOOD NEWS... FOR ALL OF US!
"PIECE BY PIECE, JESSUP ASSEMBLED HIS SALVATION GENERATOR--TO SHIELD THE CITY FROM THE STORMS OF CREATION WHICH HE FORESAW.
"JESSUP KNEW THAT THE EARTH WOULD SUFFER GREAT DEVASTATION FROM THE STORMS, AND BE TAINTED FOR EONS TO COME. SO, HE BUILT HIS SHIELD TO BEND THE SUBSTANCE OF SPACE AND THE FORCES OF TIME...
"...THAT THE DAY MIGHT PASS SLOWLY FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY, ALLOWING TIME TO RENEW THE WORLD OUTSIDE!"

"WE CAN BUT IMAGINE THE HORRORS WHICH BESET THE WORLD OUTSIDE, FOR JESSUP DID NOT TRUST THE WARNING SYSTEMS OF HIS ELDERS. ONCE HIS DEVICE WAS COMPLETE, HE MADE IT FORM A GREAT DOME ABOUT THE CITY..."



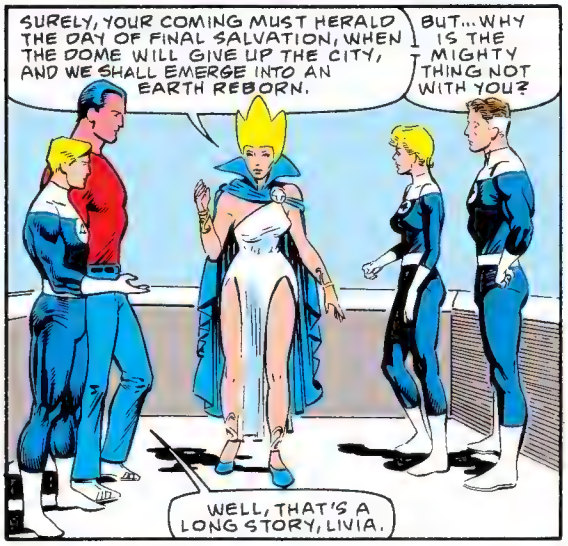
...AND SINCE THAT DAY, WE HAVE BEEN EXILES... LIVING APART FROM A WORLD GONE MAD.

IN TIME, JESSUP BECAME OUR BLESSED COORDINATOR. IT WAS HE WHO OVERSAW THE CREATION OF THE PATROLS... AND GAVE US THE WORD OF THE FOUR!

SURELY, YOUR COMING MUST HERALD THE DAY OF FINAL SALVATION, WHEN THE DOME WILL GIVE UP THE CITY, AND WE SHALL EMERGE INTO AN EARTH REBORN.

BUT... WHY IS THE MIGHTY THING NOT WITH YOU?

WELL, THAT'S A LONG STORY, LIVIA.



THEN, YOU HAVE COME TO GIVE US NEW TRUTHS?

SEVERAL NEW TRUTHS, LIVIA ... BUT THEY CANNOT ALL BE LEARNED AT ONCE.

EXCUSE US, WE MUST HAVE A MOMENT ALONE.

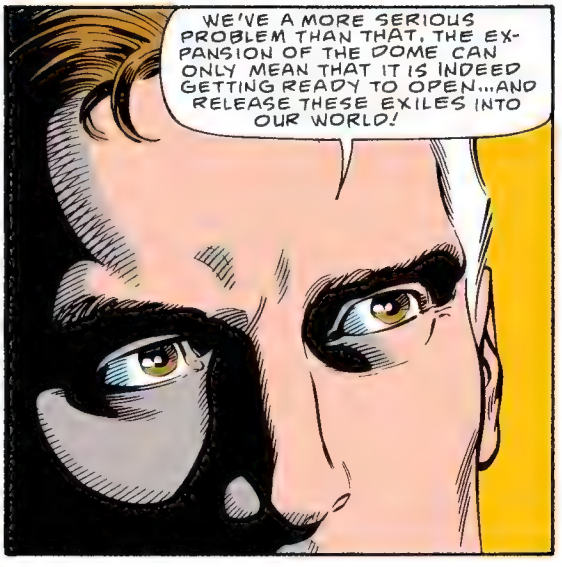
THIS CAN ONLY BE THE WORK OF HARVEY JESSUP, SUE. HE CERTAINLY HAD THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO BUILD SUCH A DEVICE. HE MUST HAVE MADE SOME TRAGIC ERROR.

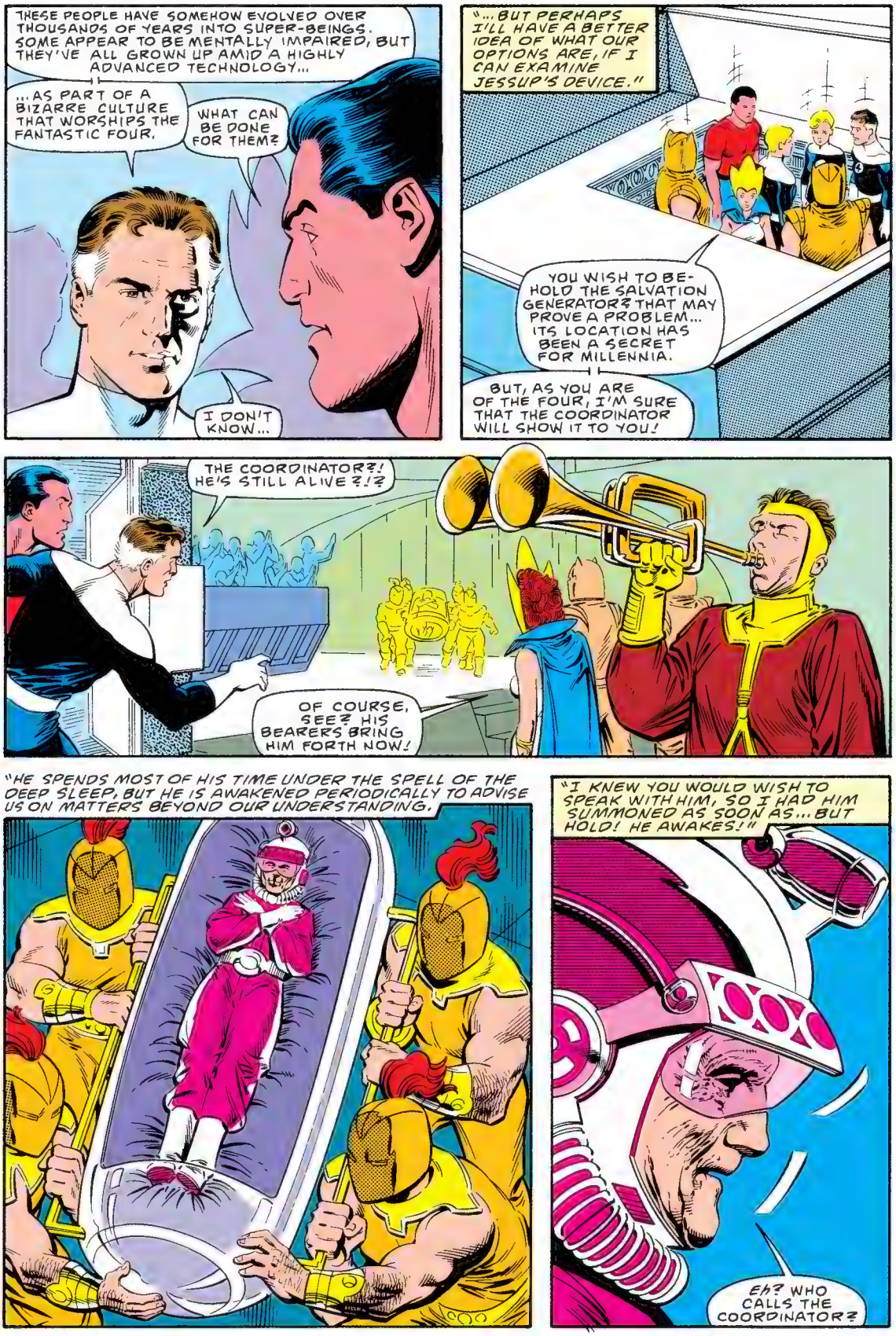
HE OBVIOUSLY INTENDED FOR TIME TO PASS SLOWER INSIDE THE DOME...

AND JUST THE OPPOSITE HAPPENED. OH, REED... THESE POOR PEOPLE! CAN WE DO ANYTHING? MAYBE EXPLAIN--

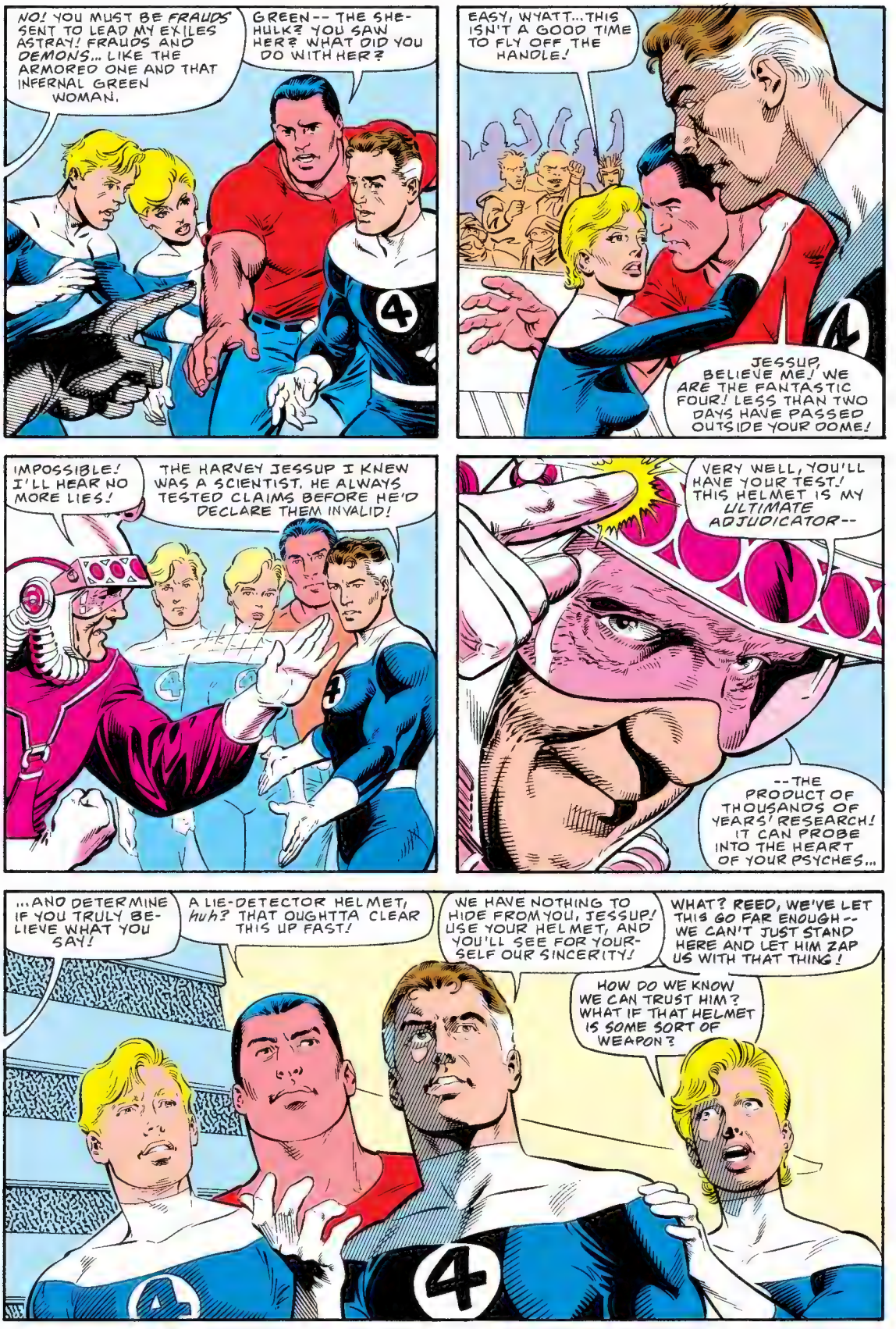
NO, SUE, IT WOULD DO NO GOOD TO PANIC THEM AGAIN. WE MUST BIDE OUR TIME--

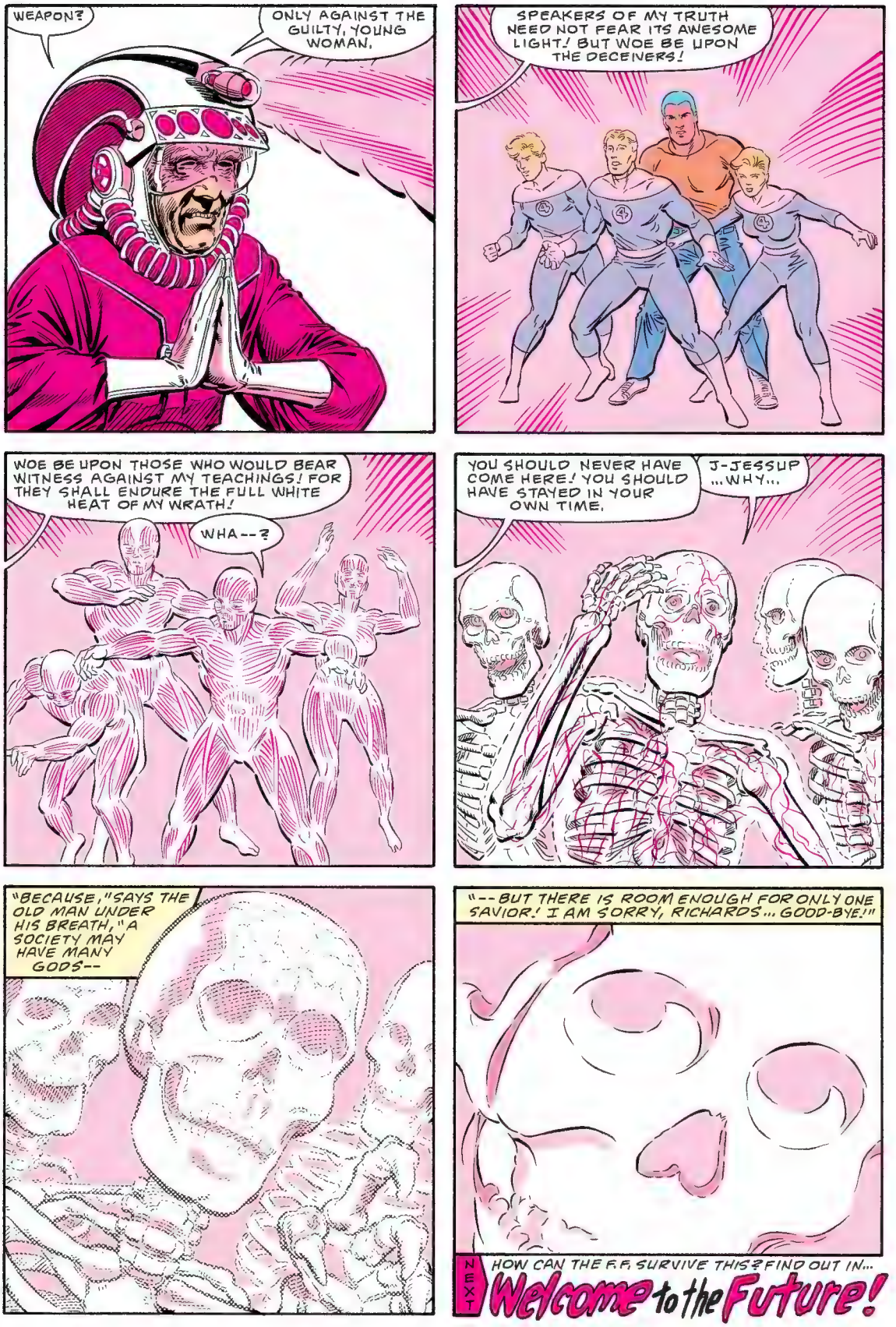
WE'VE A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM THAN THAT. THE EXPANSION OF THE DOME CAN ONLY MEAN THAT IT IS INDEED GETTING READY TO OPEN...AND RELEASE THESE EXILES INTO OUR WORLD!




THESE PEOPLE HAVE SOMEHOW EVOLVED OVER THOUSANDS OF YEARS INTO SUPER-BEINGS. SOME APPEAR TO BE MENTALLY IMPAIRED, BUT THEY'VE ALL GROWN UP AMID A HIGHLY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY...
...AS PART OF A BIZARRE CULTURE THAT WORSHIPS THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR THEM?
I DON'T KNOW...
"...BUT PERHAPS I'LL HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF WHAT OUR OPTIONS ARE, IF I CAN EXAMINE JESSUP'S DEVICE."
YOU WISH TO BEHOLD THE SALVATION GENERATOR? THAT MAY PROVE A PROBLEM... ITS LOCATION HAS BEEN A SECRET FOR MILLENNIA.
BUT, AS YOU ARE OF THE FOUR, I'M SURE THAT THE COORDINATOR WILL SHOW IT TO YOU!
THE COORDINATOR?! HE'S STILL ALIVE?!?
OF COURSE, SEE? HIS BEARERS BRING HIM FORTH NOW!
"HE SPENDS MOST OF HIS TIME UNDER THE SPELL OF THE DEEP SLEEP, BUT HE IS AWAKENED PERIODICALLY TO ADVISE US ON MATTERS BEYOND OUR UNDERSTANDING.
"I KNEW YOU WOULD WISH TO SPEAK WITH HIM, SO I HAD HIM SUMMONED AS SOON AS... BUT HOLD! HE AWAKES!"
EH? WHO CALLS THE COORDINATOR?

JESSUP? IS THAT YOU?
PLEASE, WISE-ONE! IT USUALLY TAKES THE COORDINATOR A FEW MOMENTS TO ORIENT HIMSELF.
OH..YES, OF COURSE.
WELL, SPEAK UP! WHAT IS IT? WHY HAVE YOU CALLED ME? WHAT'S THE EMERGENCY THIS TIME?
JESSUP, IT'S REED RICHARDS! YOUR PLAN HAS GONE ALL WRONG... BUT SURELY YOU MUST KNOW THAT!
EH?
I'M NOT CERTAIN WHAT WE CAN DO TOWARDS PUTTING THINGS RIGHT, BUT IF YOU'LL SHOW ME YOUR EQUIPMENT, I CAN TRY TO--!
WHAT MADNESS... WHAT SACRILEGE IS THIS? I AM THE COORDINATOR! MY PLANS DO NOT GO WRONG! WHO ARE YOU TO DARE SPEAK OTHERWISE?!
JESSUP, DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME! I'M REED RICHARDS!
YOU... YOU DO RESEMBLE... A MAN I KNEW. BUT HE MUST BE LONG DEAD BY NOW...
...DEAD AND DUST FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS AS TIME PASSES OUTSIDE MY DOME. UNLESS...


NO! YOU MUST BE FRAUDS SENT TO LEAD MY EXILES ASTRAY! FRAUDS AND DEMONS... LIKE THE ARMORED ONE AND THAT INFERNAL GREEN WOMAN.
GREEN-- THE SHE-HULK? YOU SAW HER? WHAT DID YOU DO WITH HER?
EASY, WYATT... THIS ISN'T A GOOD TIME TO FLY OFF THE HANDLE!
JESSUP, BELIEVE ME! WE ARE THE FANTASTIC FOUR! LESS THAN TWO DAYS HAVE PASSED OUTSIDE YOUR DOME!
IMPOSSIBLE! I'LL HEAR NO MORE LIES!
THE HARVEY JESSUP I KNEW WAS A SCIENTIST. HE ALWAYS TESTED CLAIMS BEFORE HE'D DECLARE THEM INVALID!
VERY WELL, YOU'LL HAVE YOUR TEST! THIS HELMET IS MY ULTIMATE ADJUDICATOR--
--THE PRODUCT OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS' RESEARCH! IT CAN PROBE INTO THE HEART OF YOUR PSYCHES...
...AND DETERMINE IF YOU TRULY BELIEVE WHAT YOU SAY!
A LIE-DETECTOR HELMET, huh? THAT OUGHTTA CLEAR THIS UP FAST!
WE HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE FROM YOU, JESSUP! USE YOUR HELMET, AND YOU'LL SEE FOR YOURSELF OUR SINCERITY!
WHAT? REED, WE'VE LET THIS GO FAR ENOUGH-- WE CAN'T JUST STAND HERE AND LET HIM ZAP US WITH THAT THING!
HOW DO WE KNOW WE CAN TRUST HIM? WHAT IF THAT HELMET IS SOME SORT OF WEAPON?


WEAPON?
ONLY AGAINST THE GUILTY, YOUNG WOMAN.
SPEAKERS OF MY TRUTH NEED NOT FEAR ITS AWESOME LIGHT! BUT WOE BE UPON THE DECEIVERS!
WOE BE UPON THOSE WHO WOULD BEAR WITNESS AGAINST MY TEACHINGS! FOR THEY SHALL ENDURE THE FULL WHITE HEAT OF MY WRATH!
WHA--?
YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME HERE! YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN YOUR OWN TIME.
J-JESSUP ...WHY...
"BECAUSE," SAYS THE OLD MAN UNDER HIS BREATH, "A SOCIETY MAY HAVE MANY GODS--
"--BUT THERE IS ROOM ENOUGH FOR ONLY ONE SAVIOR! I AM SORRY, RICHARDS... GOOD-BYE!"
NEXT
HOW CAN THE F.F. SURVIVE THIS? FIND OUT IN...
Welcome to the Future!

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
Fantastic Four
MARVEL®
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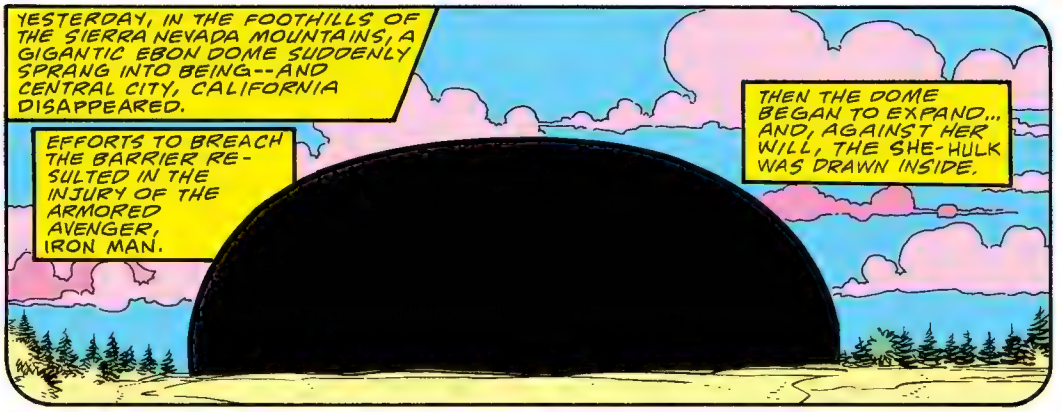
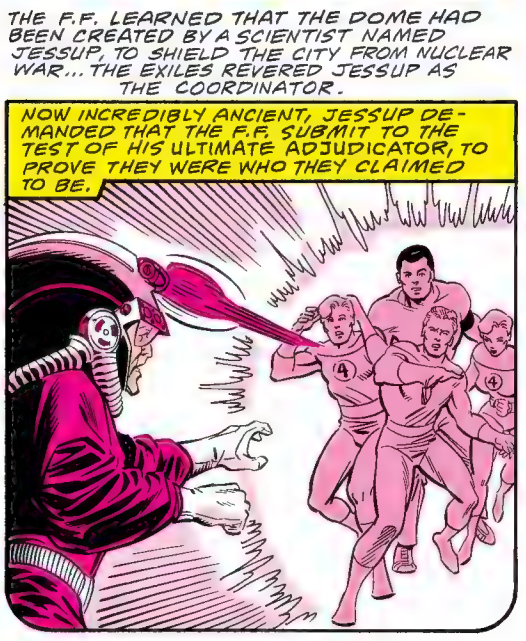
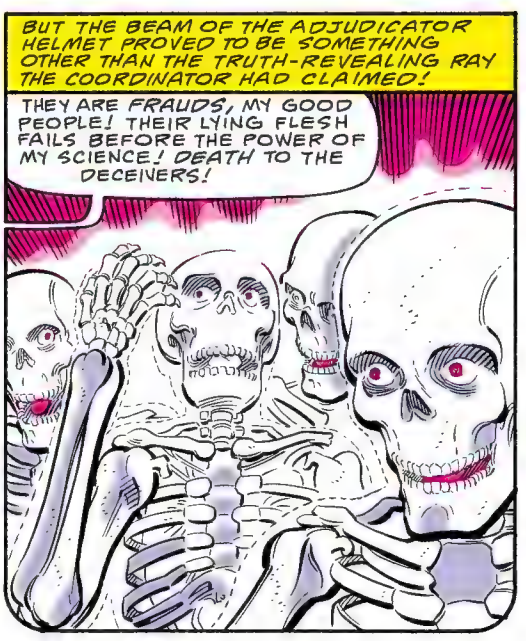
JERRY ORDWAY

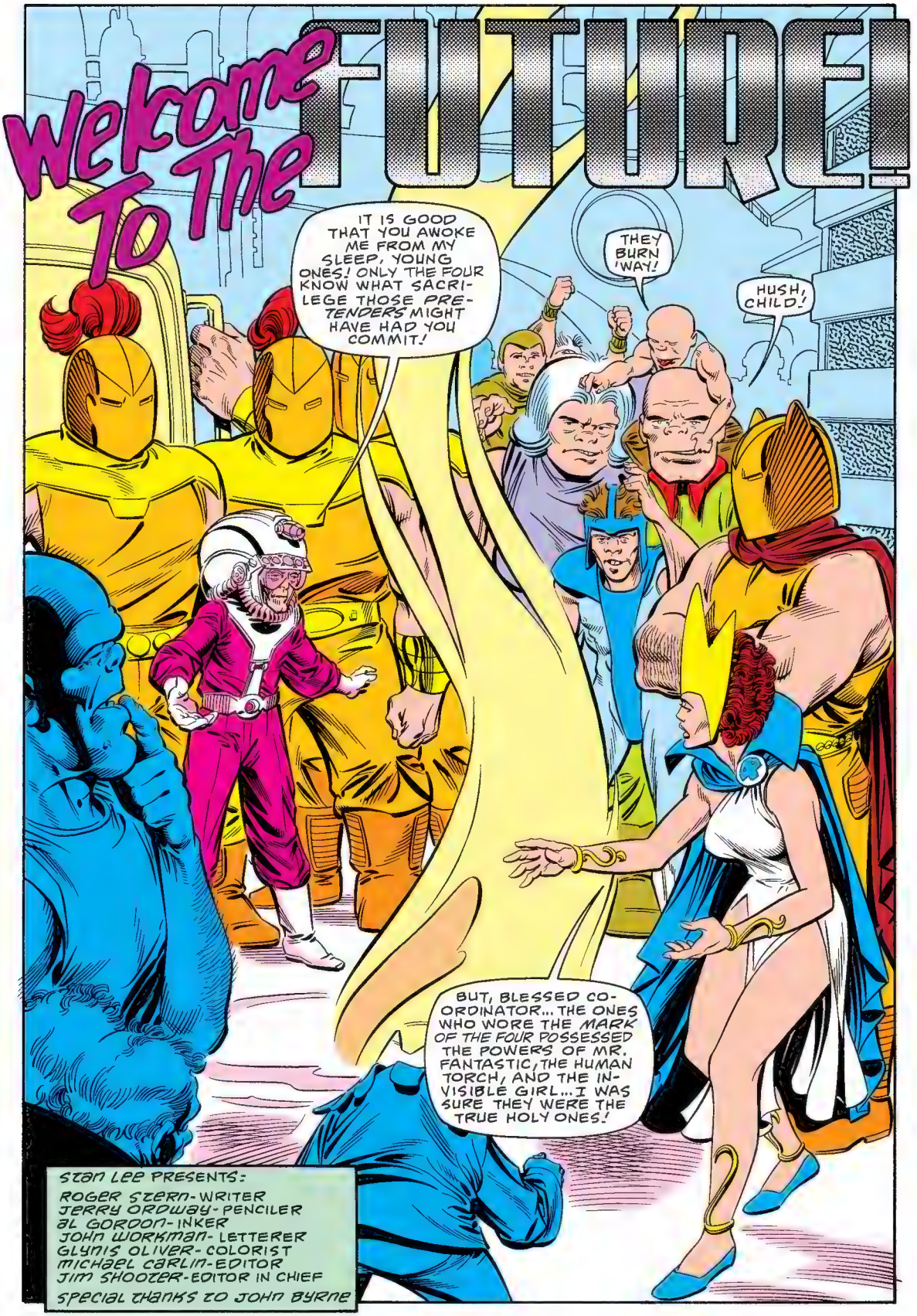

YESTERDAY, IN THE FOOTHILLS OF THE SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS, A GIGANTIC EBON DOME SUDDENLY SPRANG INTO BEING--AND CENTRAL CITY, CALIFORNIA DISAPPEARED.
EFFORTS TO BREACH THE BARRIER RESULTED IN THE INJURY OF THE ARMORED AVENGER, IRON MAN.
THEN THE DOME BEGAN TO EXPAND... AND, AGAINST HER WILL, THE SHE-HULK WAS DRAWN INSIDE.

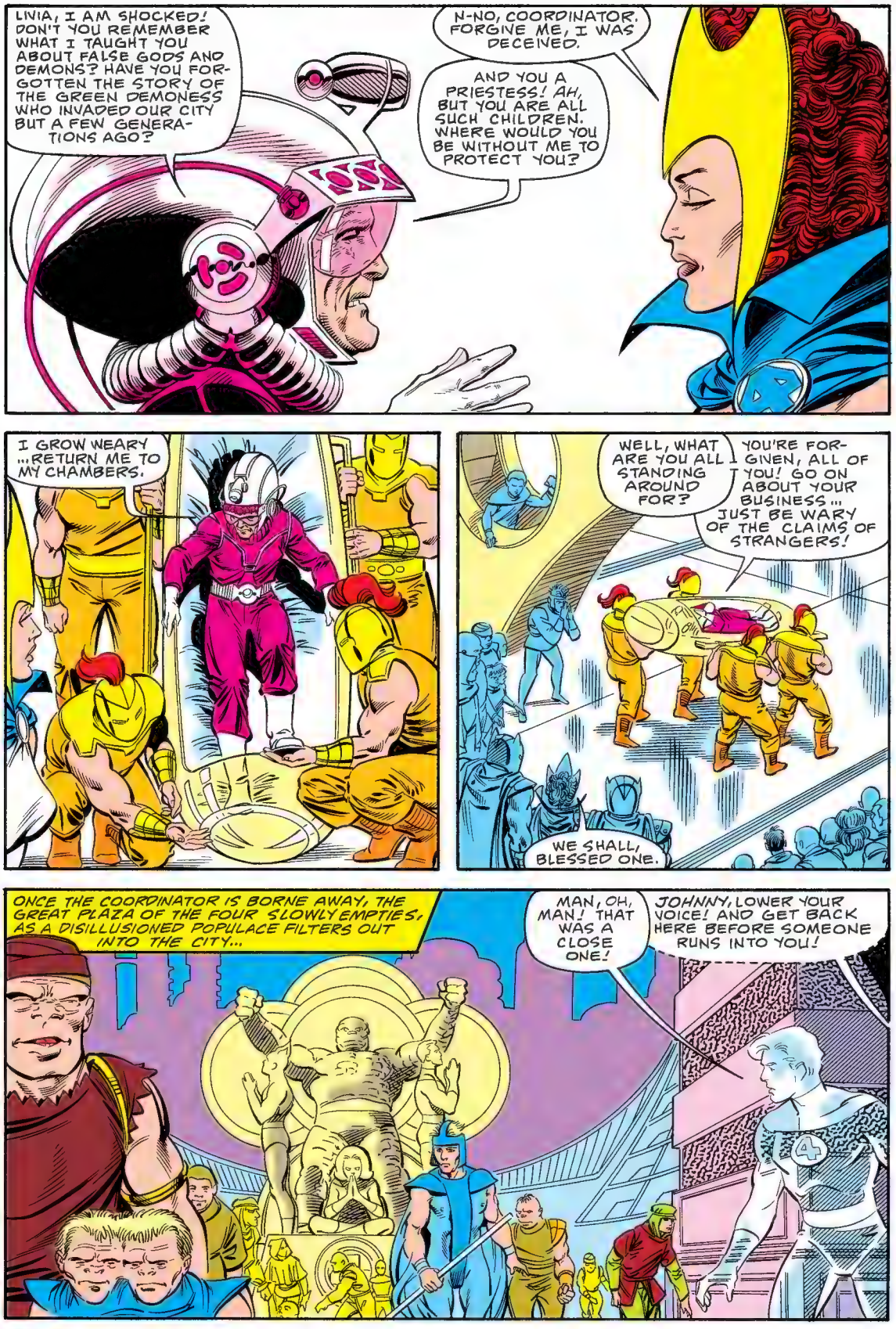
ENTERING THE DOME AFTER THEIR TEAMMATE, THE REST OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR AND WYATT WINGFOOT DISCOVERED A FUTURISTIC SUPER-CITY DEFENDED BY PATROLS OF WEIRDLY MUTATED BEINGS.

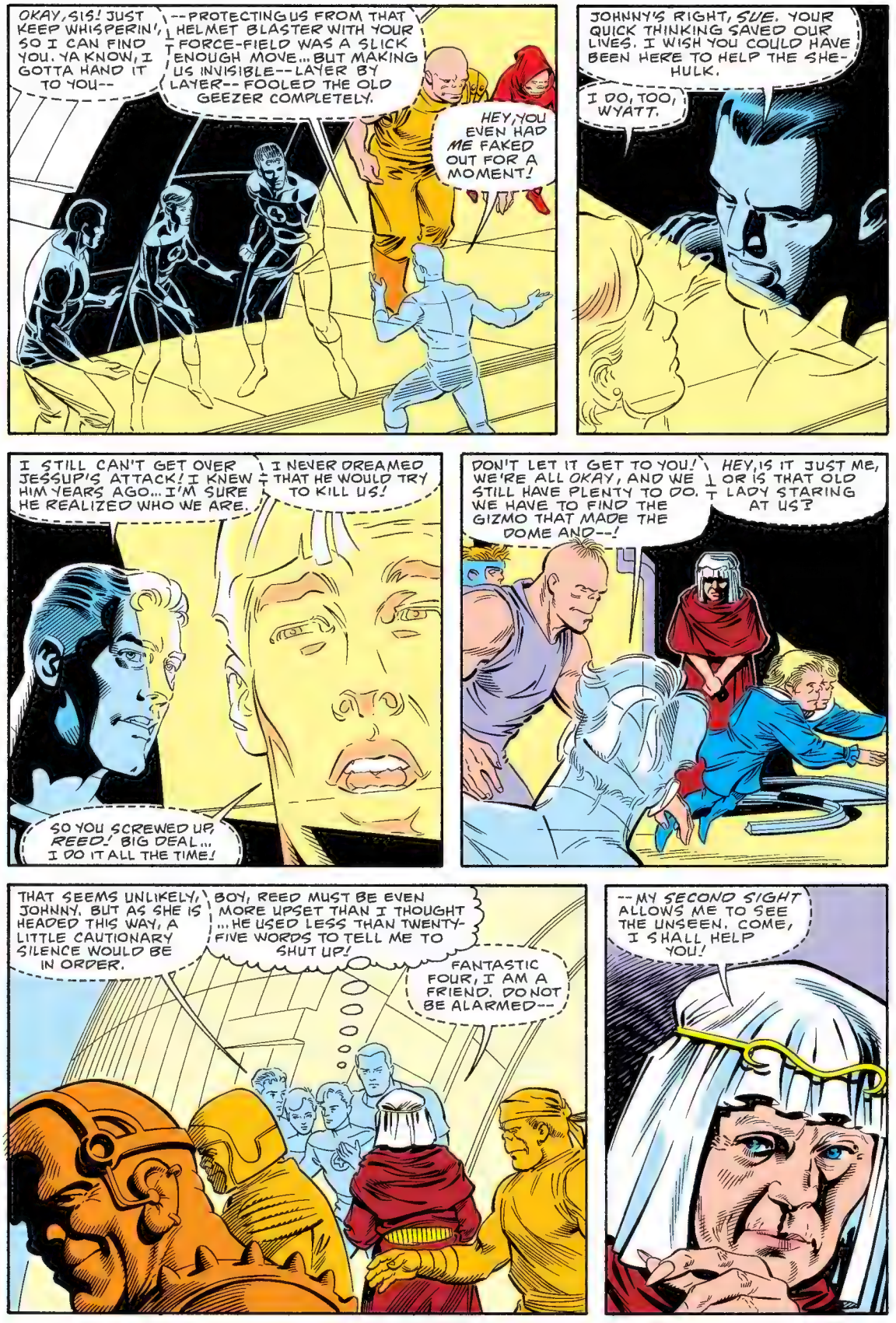
BUT THE BATTLE ENDED WHEN THE PATROLS REALIZED WHOM THEY FOUGHT...
TIME WAS VASTLY ACCELERATED WITHIN THE DOME... FOR ITS INHABITANTS, THOUSANDS OF YEARS HAD PASSED. AS EXILES FROM THE REST OF HUMANITY, THEIR CULTURE HAD COME TO WORSHIP...
...THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

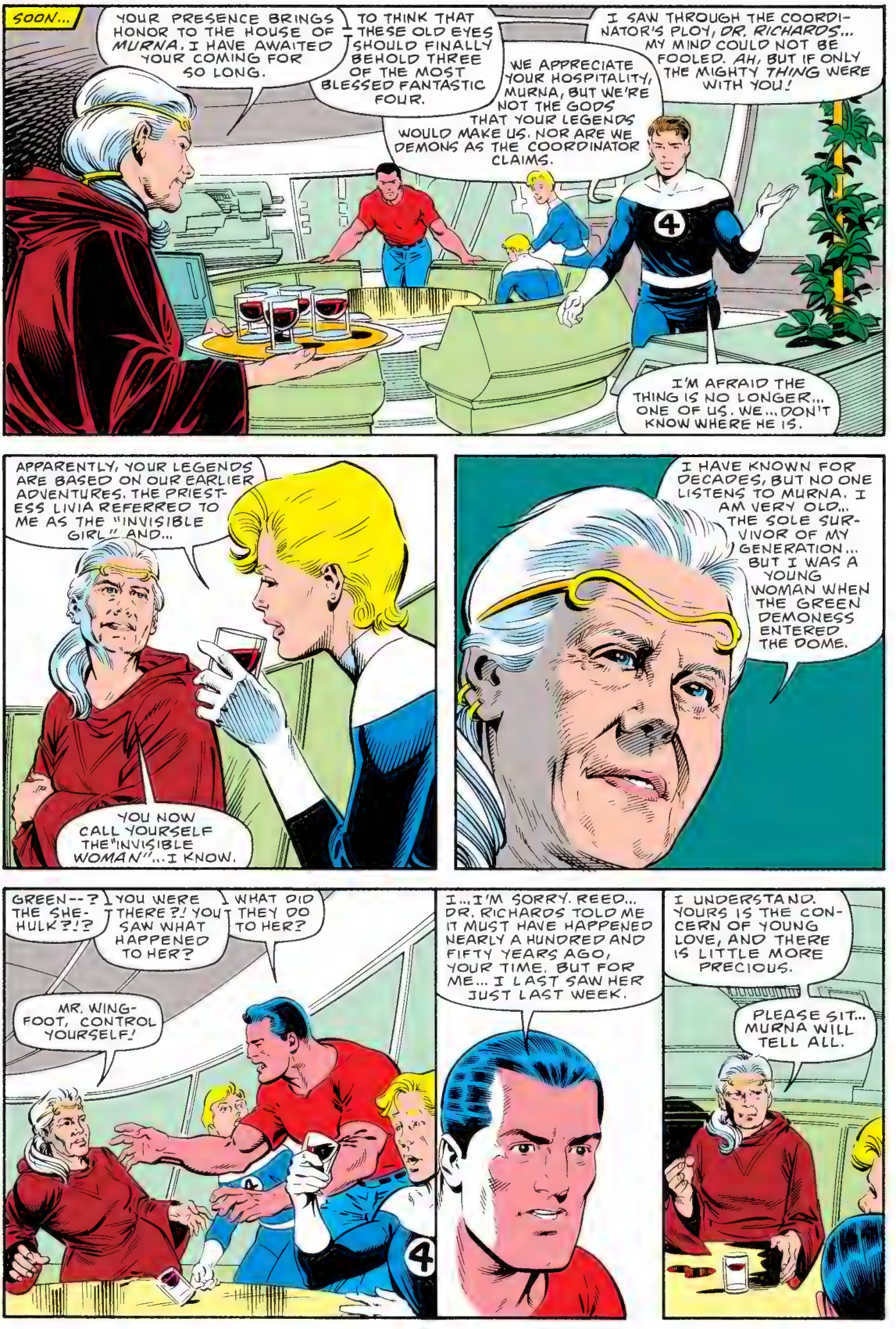

THE F.F. LEARNED THAT THE DOME HAD BEEN CREATED BY A SCIENTIST NAMED JESSUP, TO SHIELD THE CITY FROM NUCLEAR WAR... THE EXILES REVERED JESSUP AS THE COORDINATOR.
NOW INCREDIBLY ANCIENT, JESSUP DEMANDED THAT THE F.F. SUBMIT TO THE TEST OF HIS ULTIMATE ADJUDICATOR, TO PROVE THEY WERE WHO THEY CLAIMED TO BE.


BUT THE BEAM OF THE ADJUDICATOR HELMET PROVED TO BE SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE TRUTH-REVEALING RAY THE COORDINATOR HAD CLAIMED!
THEY ARE FRAUDS, MY GOOD PEOPLE! THEIR LYING FLESH FAILS BEFORE THE POWER OF MY SCIENCE! DEATH TO THE DECEIVERS!

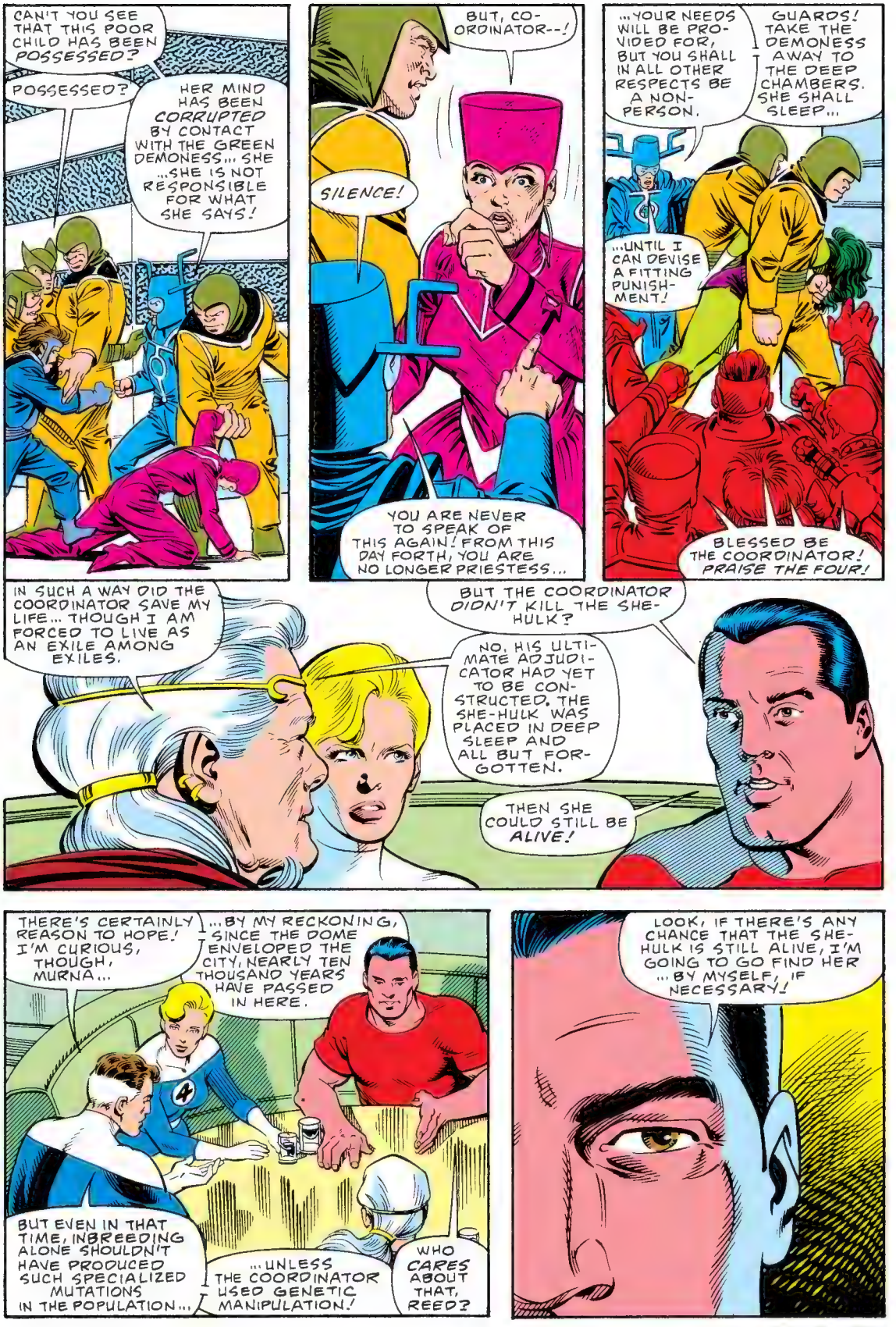

Welcome To The FUTURE!
IT IS GOOD THAT YOU AWOKE ME FROM MY SLEEP, YOUNG ONES! ONLY THE FOUR KNOW WHAT SACRILEGE THOSE PRETENDERS MIGHT HAVE HAD YOU COMMIT!
THEY BURN 'WAY!
HUSH, CHILD!
BUT, BLESSED COORDINATOR... THE ONES WHO WORE THE MARK OF THE FOUR POSSESSED THE POWERS OF MR. FANTASTIC, THE HUMAN TORCH, AND THE INVISIBLE GIRL... I WAS SURE THEY WERE THE TRUE HOLY ONES!
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
ROGER STERN-WRITER
JERRY ORDWAY-PENCILER
AL GORDON-INKER
JOHN WORKMAN-LETTERER
GLYNIS OLIVER-COLORIST
MICHAEL CARLIN-EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER-EDITOR IN CHIEF
SPECIAL THANKS TO JOHN BYRNE


LIVIA, I AM SHOCKED! DON'T YOU REMEMBER WHAT I TAUGHT YOU ABOUT FALSE GODS AND DEMONS? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE STORY OF THE GREEN DEMONESS WHO INVADED OUR CITY BUT A FEW GENERATIONS AGO?
N-NO, COORDINATOR. FORGIVE ME, I WAS DECEIVED.
AND YOU A PRIESTESS! AH, BUT YOU ARE ALL SUCH CHILDREN. WHERE WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT ME TO PROTECT YOU?
I GROW WEARY ...RETURN ME TO MY CHAMBERS.
WELL, WHAT ARE YOU ALL STANDING AROUND FOR?
YOU'RE FORGIVEN, ALL OF YOU! GO ON ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS... JUST BE WARY OF THE CLAIMS OF STRANGERS!
WE SHALL, BLESSED ONE.
ONCE THE COORDINATOR IS BORNE AWAY, THE GREAT PLAZA OF THE FOUR SLOWLY EMPTIES, AS A DISILLUSIONED POPULACE FILTERS OUT INTO THE CITY...
MAN, OH, MAN! THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE!
JOHNNY, LOWER YOUR VOICE! AND GET BACK HERE BEFORE SOMEONE RUNS INTO YOU!

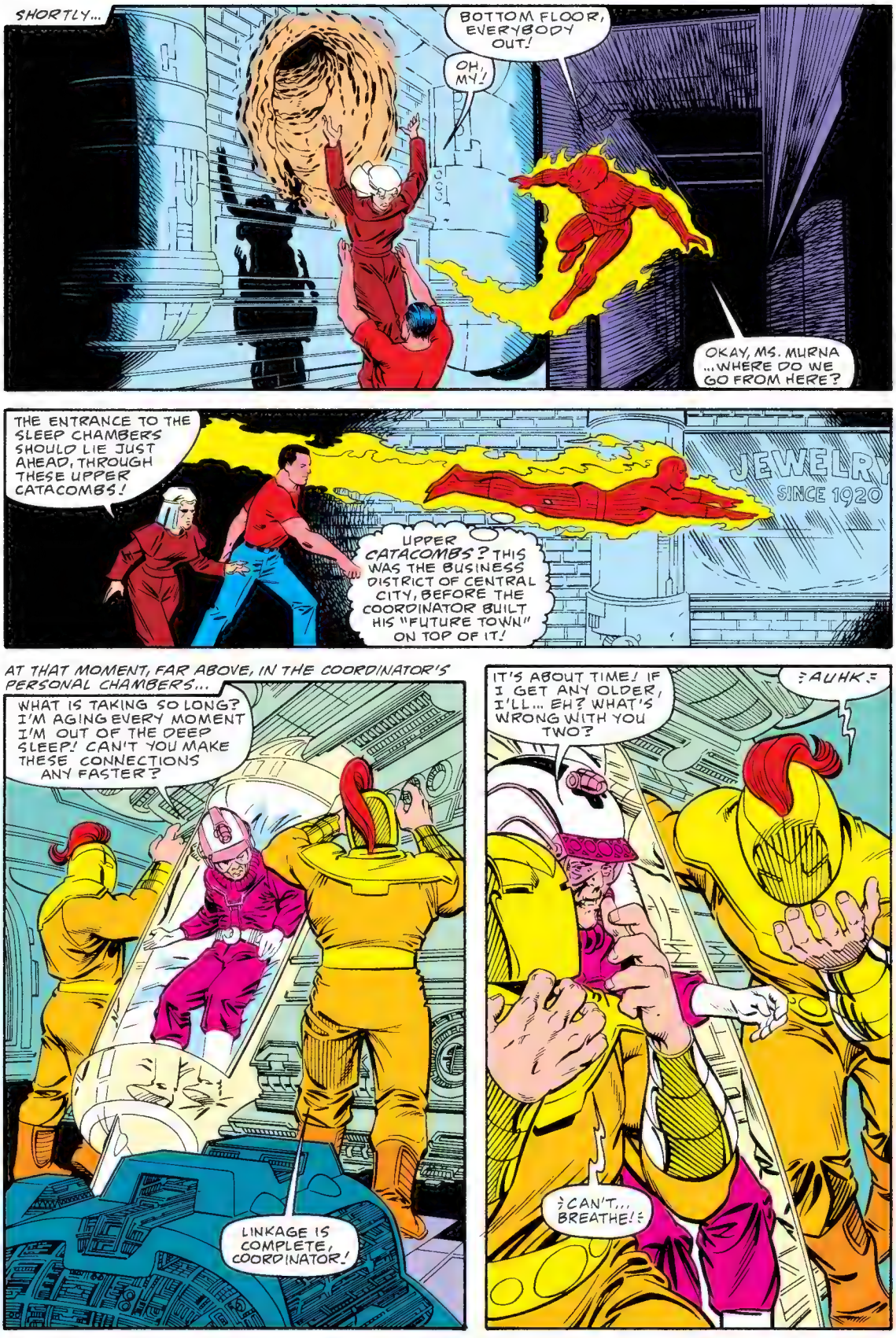

OKAY, SIS! JUST KEEP WHISPERIN', SO I CAN FIND YOU. YA KNOW, I GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU--
--PROTECTING US FROM THAT HELMET BLASTER WITH YOUR FORCE-FIELD WAS A SLICK ENOUGH MOVE... BUT MAKING US INVISIBLE--LAYER BY LAYER--FOOLED THE OLD GEEZER COMPLETELY.
HEY, YOU EVEN HAD ME FAKED OUT FOR A MOMENT!
JOHNNY'S RIGHT, SUE. YOUR QUICK THINKING SAVED OUR LIVES. I WISH YOU COULD HAVE BEEN HERE TO HELP THE SHE-HULK.
I DO, TOO, WYATT.
I STILL CAN'T GET OVER JESSUP'S ATTACK! I KNEW HIM YEARS AGO... I'M SURE HE REALIZED WHO WE ARE.
I NEVER DREAMED THAT HE WOULD TRY TO KILL US!
SO YOU SCREWED UP, REED! BIG DEAL... I DO IT ALL THE TIME!
DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU! WE'RE ALL OKAY, AND WE STILL HAVE PLENTY TO DO. WE HAVE TO FIND THE GIZMO THAT MADE THE DOME AND--!
HEY, IS IT JUST ME, OR IS THAT OLD LADY STARING AT US?
THAT SEEMS UNLIKELY, JOHNNY. BUT AS SHE IS HEADED THIS WAY, A LITTLE CAUTIONARY SILENCE WOULD BE IN ORDER.
BOY, REED MUST BE EVEN MORE UPSET THAN I THOUGHT ...HE USED LESS THAN TWENTY-FIVE WORDS TO TELL ME TO SHUT UP!
FANTASTIC FOUR, I AM A FRIEND. DO NOT BE ALARMED--
--MY SECOND SIGHT ALLOWS ME TO SEE THE UNSEEN. COME, I SHALL HELP YOU!

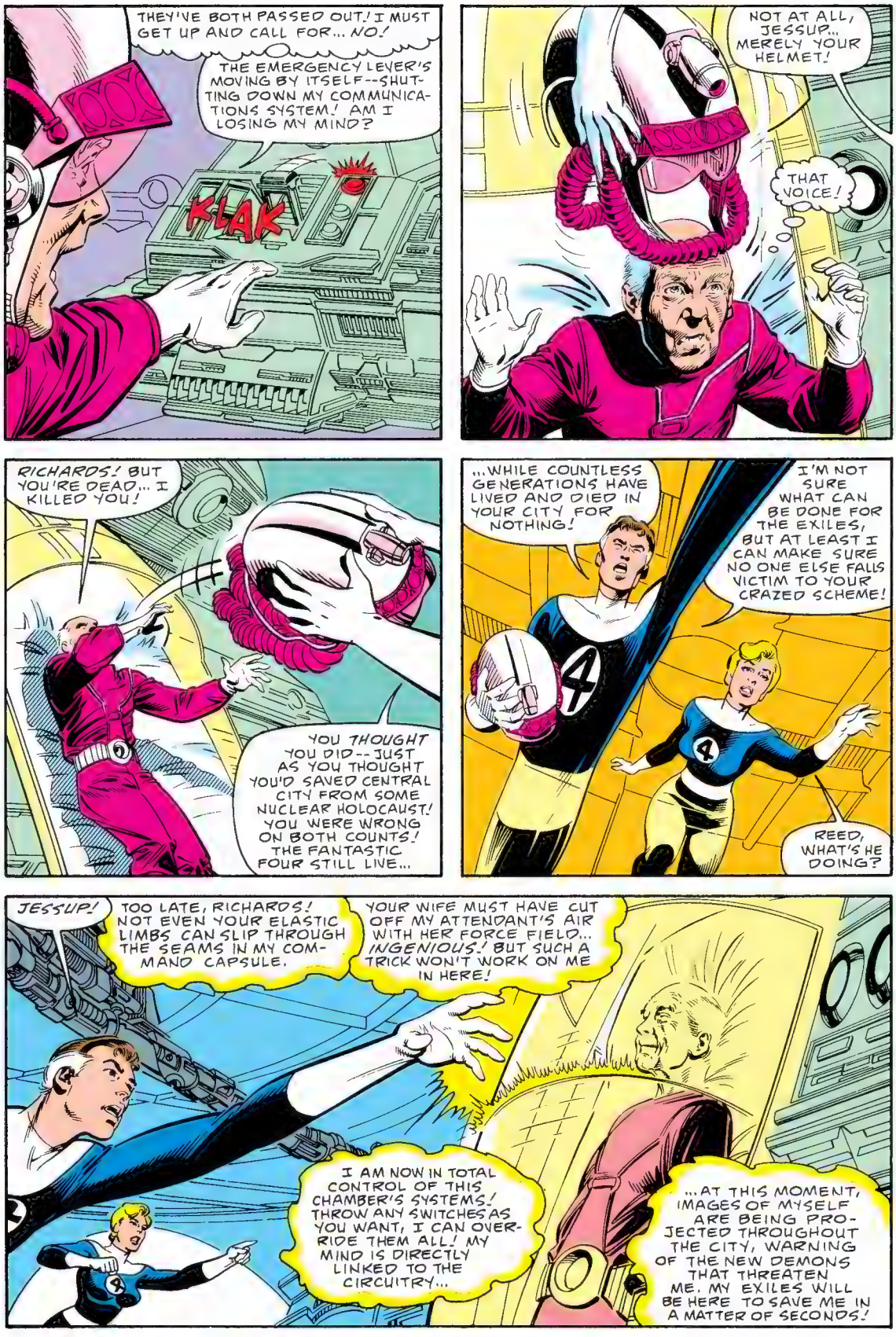

SOON...
YOUR PRESENCE BRINGS HONOR TO THE HOUSE OF MURNA. I HAVE AWAITED YOUR COMING FOR SO LONG.
TO THINK THAT THESE OLD EYES SHOULD FINALLY BEHOLD THREE OF THE MOST BLESSED FANTASTIC FOUR.
I SAW THROUGH THE COORDINATOR'S PLOY, DR. RICHARDS... MY MIND COULD NOT BE FOOLED. AH, BUT IF ONLY THE MIGHTY THING WERE WITH YOU!
WE APPRECIATE YOUR HOSPITALITY, MURNA, BUT WE'RE NOT THE GODS THAT YOUR LEGENDS WOULD MAKE US. NOR ARE WE DEMONS AS THE COORDINATOR CLAIMS.
I'M AFRAID THE THING IS NO LONGER... ONE OF US. WE... DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS.
APPARENTLY, YOUR LEGENDS ARE BASED ON OUR EARLIER ADVENTURES. THE PRIESTESS LIVIA REFERRED TO ME AS THE "INVISIBLE GIRL" AND...
YOU NOW CALL YOURSELF THE "INVISIBLE WOMAN"... I KNOW.
I HAVE KNOWN FOR DECADES, BUT NO ONE LISTENS TO MURNA. I AM VERY OLD... THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF MY GENERATION... BUT I WAS A YOUNG WOMAN WHEN THE GREEN DEMONESS ENTERED THE DOME.
GREEN--? THE SHE-HULK?!?
YOU WERE THERE?! YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?
WHAT DID THEY DO TO HER?
MR. WINGFOOT, CONTROL YOURSELF!
I...I'M SORRY. REED... DR. RICHARDS TOLD ME IT MUST HAVE HAPPENED NEARLY A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO, YOUR TIME. BUT FOR ME... I LAST SAW HER JUST LAST WEEK.
I UNDERSTAND. YOURS IS THE CONCERN OF YOUNG LOVE, AND THERE IS LITTLE MORE PRECIOUS.
PLEASE SIT... MURNA WILL TELL ALL.

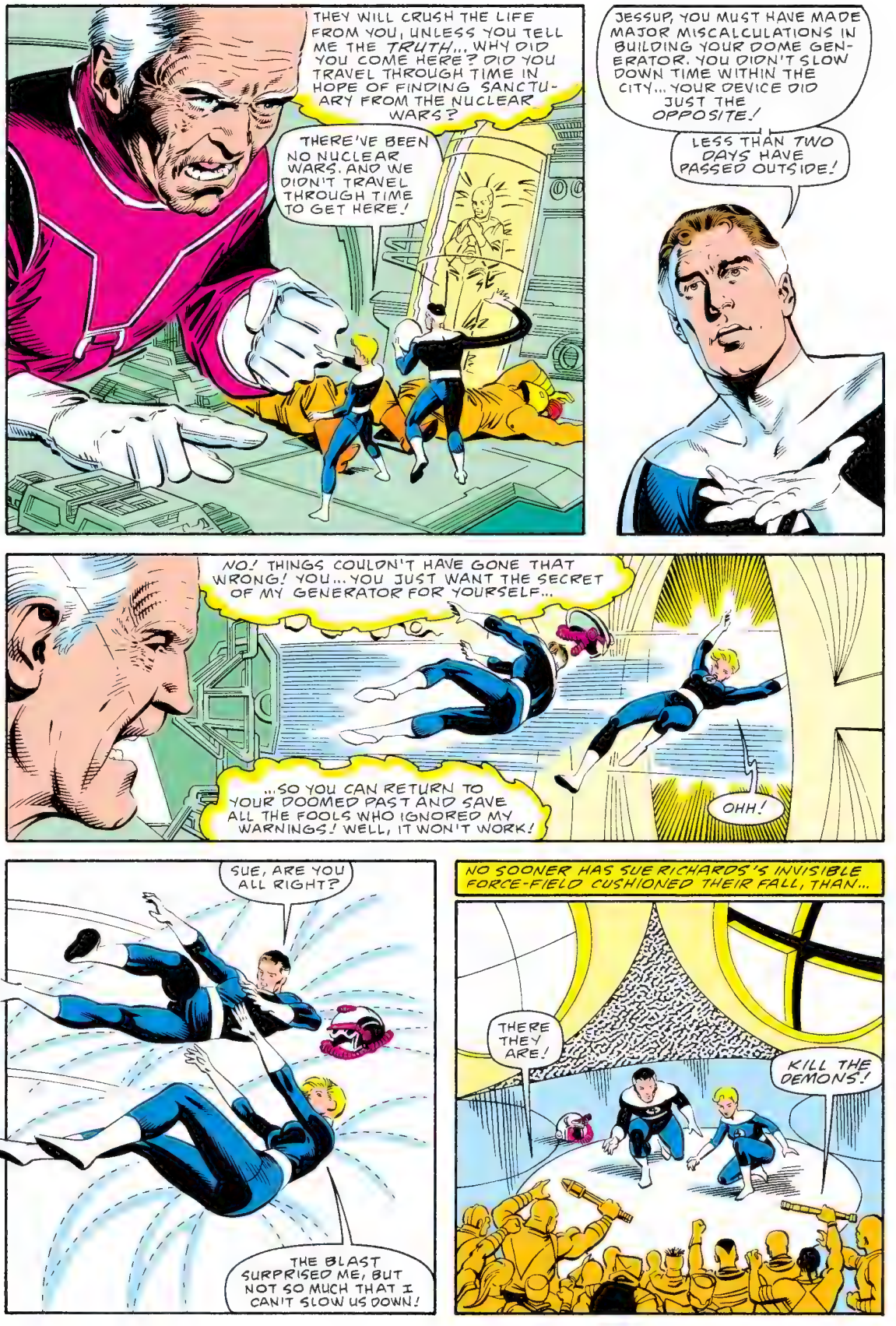
IT HAPPENED, AS YOU SAY, A CENTURY AND A HALF AGO. THERE HAD BEEN A PREVIOUS INVADER--AN ARMORED ONE--SOME DECADES EARLIER, AND IN RESPONSE, THE PATROLS HAD BEEN ORGANIZED TO MEET SUCH THREATS...
"...BUT EVEN WITH YEARS OF TRAINING, THE PATROLS WERE NOT QUITE PREPARED TO FACE YOUR SHE-HULK. IN BATTLE AFTER BATTLE, THE PATROLS PURSUED HER THROUGH THE CITY FOR MONTHS.
"FINALLY, SHE WAS OVERCOME BY SUPERIOR NUMBERS AND BROUGHT BEFORE THE COORDINATOR."
WE MUST KNOW WHO THIS DEMON IS, AND WHY SHE IS HERE. MURNA, PROBE THE CREATURE'S BRAIN!
"I WAS HIGH PRIESTESS THEN, BUT NOTHING THE COORDINATOR HAD TAUGHT ME PREPARED ME FOR WHAT I READ IN HER MIND..."
SHE IS CALLED THE SHE-HULK... SHE IS AN AVENGER... AND ONE OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR! S-SHE REPLACED THE THING!
"MY PEOPLE COULD NOT ACCEPT SUCH REVELATIONS..."
LIES!
N-NO! IT MUST BE TRUE! I HAVE SEEN--!
THING CANNOT BE REPLACED --THING IS OF THE FOUR!
SPEAK NO MORE BLASPHEMY!
STOP! STOP!!
GOOD PEOPLE, STOP! SHE KNOWS NOT WHAT SHE SAYS!

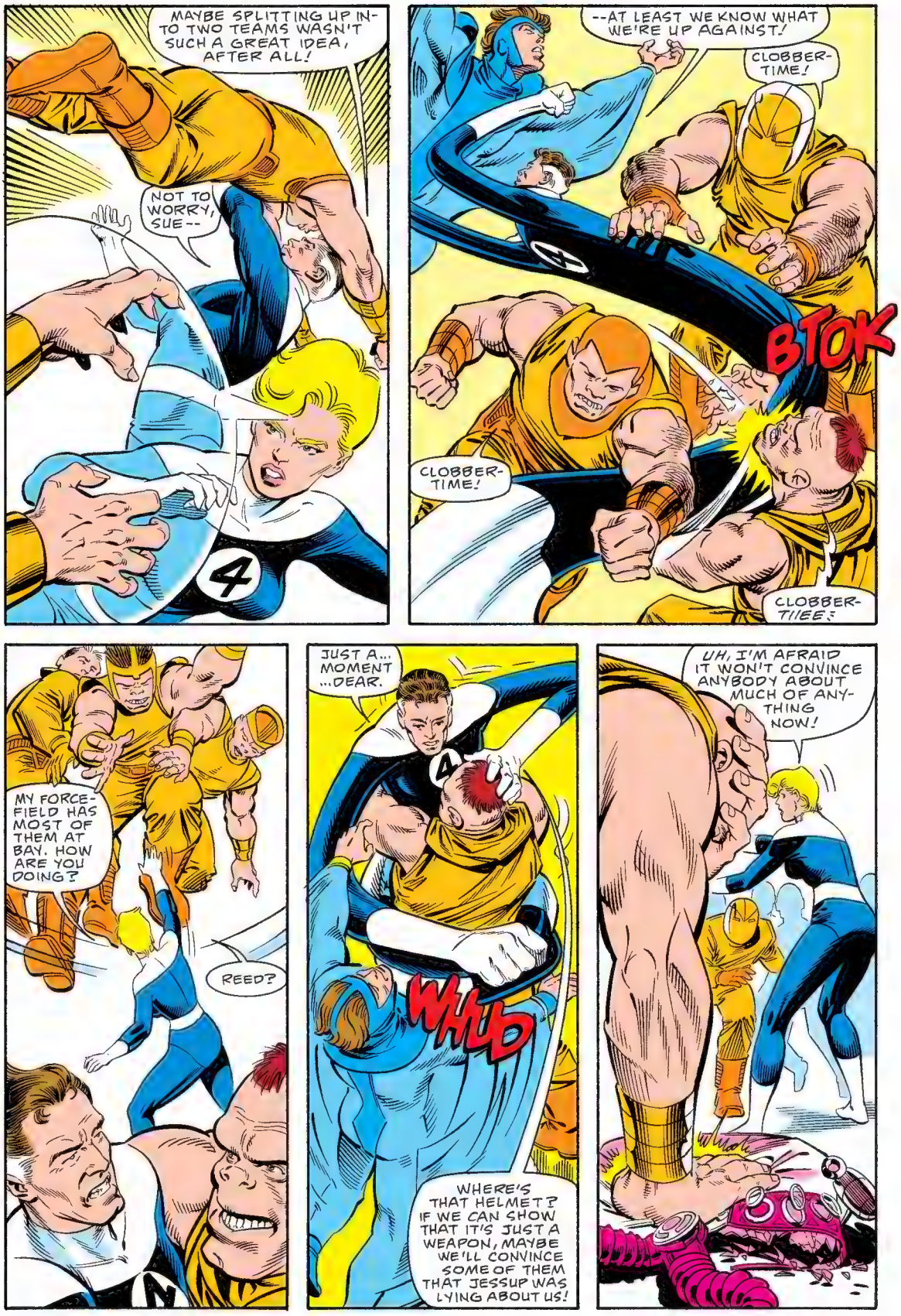

CAN'T YOU SEE THAT THIS POOR CHILD HAS BEEN POSSESSED?
POSSESSED?
HER MIND HAS BEEN CORRUPTED BY CONTACT WITH THE GREEN DEMONESS... SHE ...SHE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT SHE SAYS!
BUT, CO-ORDINATOR--!
SILENCE!
YOU ARE NEVER TO SPEAK OF THIS AGAIN! FROM THIS DAY FORTH, YOU ARE NO LONGER PRIESTESS...
...YOUR NEEDS WILL BE PROVIDED FOR, BUT YOU SHALL IN ALL OTHER RESPECTS BE A NON-PERSON.
GUARDS! TAKE THE DEMONESS AWAY TO THE DEEP CHAMBERS. SHE SHALL SLEEP...
...UNTIL I CAN DEVISE A FITTING PUNISHMENT!
BLESSED BE THE COORDINATOR! PRAISE THE FOUR!
IN SUCH A WAY DID THE COORDINATOR SAVE MY LIFE... THOUGH I AM FORCED TO LIVE AS AN EXILE AMONG EXILES.
BUT THE COORDINATOR DIDN'T KILL THE SHE-HULK?
NO. HIS ULTIMATE ADJUDICATOR HAD YET TO BE CONSTRUCTED. THE SHE-HULK WAS PLACED IN DEEP SLEEP AND ALL BUT FORGOTTEN.
THEN SHE COULD STILL BE ALIVE!
THERE'S CERTAINLY REASON TO HOPE! I'M CURIOUS, THOUGH, MURNA...
...BY MY RECKONING, SINCE THE DOME ENVELOPED THE CITY, NEARLY TEN THOUSAND YEARS HAVE PASSED IN HERE.
BUT EVEN IN THAT TIME, INBREEDING ALONE SHOULDN'T HAVE PRODUCED SUCH SPECIALIZED MUTATIONS IN THE POPULATION...
...UNLESS THE COORDINATOR USED GENETIC MANIPULATION!
WHO CARES ABOUT THAT, REED?
LOOK, IF THERE'S ANY CHANCE THAT THE SHE-HULK IS STILL ALIVE, I'M GOING TO GO FIND HER ...BY MYSELF, IF NECESSARY!

NO NEED FOR THAT, OL' BUDDY! YOU CAN COUNT ON MY HELP!
JUST A MINUTE! I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, WYATT, BUT WE ALSO NEED TO FIND THE DEVICE THAT'S GENERATING THE DOME--
--AND THAT MAY REQUIRE ANOTHER CONFRONTATION WITH JESSUP.
SURELY WE AREN'T ALL NEEDED FOR THAT, REED! LET'S THINK THIS THING THROUGH... NOW, WHAT IF--?
AND SO...
THERE IS THE ENTRANCE TO THE CITY'S LOWER REACHES, WHERE THE DEEP SLEEP CHAMBERS ARE BURIED.
SO MANY GUARDS... AN ALARM WOULD SURELY BE RAISED BEFORE EVEN YOU COULD OVERCOME THEM, JON-STORM.
WELL, IN THAT CASE--
--WE'LL JUST GO AROUND THEM! VOILA!... ONE REAR ENTRANCE, WHILE YOU WAIT, COURTESY OF THE HUMAN TORCH EXCAVATION COMPANY!
GIVE ME A COUPLE OF MINUTES TO SMOOTH OUT THE ROUGH EDGES AND ABSORB THE EXCESS HEAT, WYATT... THEN YOU CAN FOLLOW ME DOWN!
CHECK!


SHORTLY...
BOTTOM FLOOR, EVERYBODY OUT!
OH, MY!
OKAY, MS. MURNA ...WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
THE ENTRANCE TO THE SLEEP CHAMBERS SHOULD LIE JUST AHEAD, THROUGH THESE UPPER CATACOMBS!
JEWELRY SINCE 1920
UPPER CATACOMBS? THIS WAS THE BUSINESS DISTRICT OF CENTRAL CITY, BEFORE THE COORDINATOR BUILT HIS "FUTURE TOWN" ON TOP OF IT!
AT THAT MOMENT, FAR ABOVE, IN THE COORDINATOR'S PERSONAL CHAMBERS...
WHAT IS TAKING SO LONG? I'M AGING EVERY MOMENT I'M OUT OF THE DEEP SLEEP! CAN'T YOU MAKE THESE CONNECTIONS ANY FASTER?
LINKAGE IS COMPLETE, COORDINATOR!
IT'S ABOUT TIME! IF I GET ANY OLDER, I'LL... EH? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU TWO?
;AUHK.;
;CAN'T... BREATHE!;

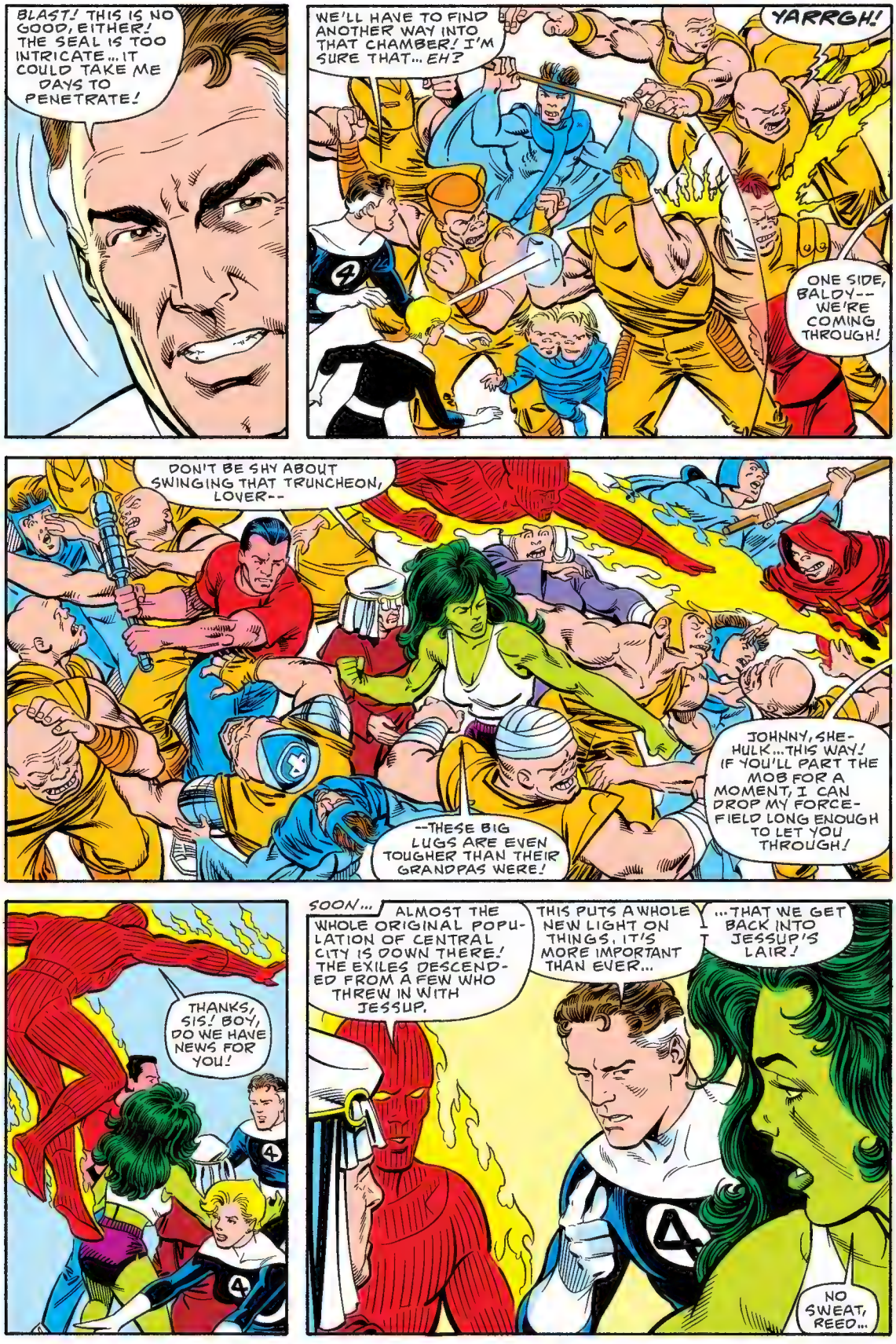

THEY'VE BOTH PASSED OUT! I MUST GET UP AND CALL FOR... NO!
THE EMERGENCY LEVER'S MOVING BY ITSELF--SHUTTING DOWN MY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM! AM I LOSING MY MIND?
KLAK
NOT AT ALL, JESSUP... MERELY YOUR HELMET!
THAT VOICE!
RICHARDS! BUT YOU'RE DEAD... I KILLED YOU!
YOU THOUGHT YOU DID--JUST AS YOU THOUGHT YOU'D SAVED CENTRAL CITY FROM SOME NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST! YOU WERE WRONG ON BOTH COUNTS! THE FANTASTIC FOUR STILL LIVE...
...WHILE COUNTLESS GENERATIONS HAVE LIVED AND DIED IN YOUR CITY FOR NOTHING!
I'M NOT SURE WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR THE EXILES, BUT AT LEAST I CAN MAKE SURE NO ONE ELSE FALLS VICTIM TO YOUR CRAZED SCHEME!
REED, WHAT'S HE DOING?
JESSUP!
TOO LATE, RICHARDS! NOT EVEN YOUR ELASTIC LIMBS CAN SLIP THROUGH THE SEAMS IN MY COMMAND CAPSULE.
YOUR WIFE MUST HAVE CUT OFF MY ATTENDANT'S AIR WITH HER FORCE FIELD... INGENIOUS! BUT SUCH A TRICK WON'T WORK ON ME IN HERE!
I AM NOW IN TOTAL CONTROL OF THIS CHAMBER'S SYSTEMS! THROW ANY SWITCHES AS YOU WANT, I CAN OVERRIDE THEM ALL! MY MIND IS DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE CIRCUITRY...
...AT THIS MOMENT, IMAGES OF MYSELF ARE BEING PROJECTED THROUGHOUT THE CITY, WARNING OF THE NEW DEMONS THAT THREATEN ME. MY EXILES WILL BE HERE TO SAVE ME IN A MATTER OF SECONDS!


THEY WILL CRUSH THE LIFE FROM YOU, UNLESS YOU TELL ME THE TRUTH... WHY DID YOU COME HERE? DID YOU TRAVEL THROUGH TIME IN HOPE OF FINDING SANCTUARY FROM THE NUCLEAR WARS?
THERE'VE BEEN NO NUCLEAR WARS. AND WE DIDN'T TRAVEL THROUGH TIME TO GET HERE!
JESSUP, YOU MUST HAVE MADE MAJOR MISCALCULATIONS IN BUILDING YOUR DOME GENERATOR. YOU DIDN'T SLOW DOWN TIME WITHIN THE CITY... YOUR DEVICE DID JUST THE OPPOSITE!
LESS THAN TWO DAYS HAVE PASSED OUTSIDE!
NO! THINGS COULDN'T HAVE GONE THAT WRONG! YOU... YOU JUST WANT THE SECRET OF MY GENERATOR FOR YOURSELF...
...SO YOU CAN RETURN TO YOUR DOOMED PAST AND SAVE ALL THE FOOLS WHO IGNORED MY WARNINGS! WELL, IT WON'T WORK!
OHH!
SUE, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
THE BLAST SURPRISED ME, BUT NOT SO MUCH THAT I CAN'T SLOW US DOWN!
NO SOONER HAS SUE RICHARDS'S INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD CUSHIONED THEIR FALL, THAN...
THERE THEY ARE!
KILL THE DEMONS!


MAYBE SPLITTING UP INTO TWO TEAMS WASN'T SUCH A GREAT IDEA, AFTER ALL!
NOT TO WORRY, SUE--
--AT LEAST WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST!
CLOBBER-TIME!
BTOK
CLOBBER-TIME!
CLOBBER-TIEE!
MY FORCE-FIELD HAS MOST OF THEM AT BAY. HOW ARE YOU DOING?
REED?
JUST A... MOMENT ...DEAR.
WHUD
WHERE'S THAT HELMET? IF WE CAN SHOW THAT IT'S JUST A WEAPON, MAYBE WE'LL CONVINCE SOME OF THEM THAT JESSUP WAS LYING ABOUT US!
UH, I'M AFRAID IT WON'T CONVINCE ANYBODY ABOUT MUCH OF ANYTHING NOW!

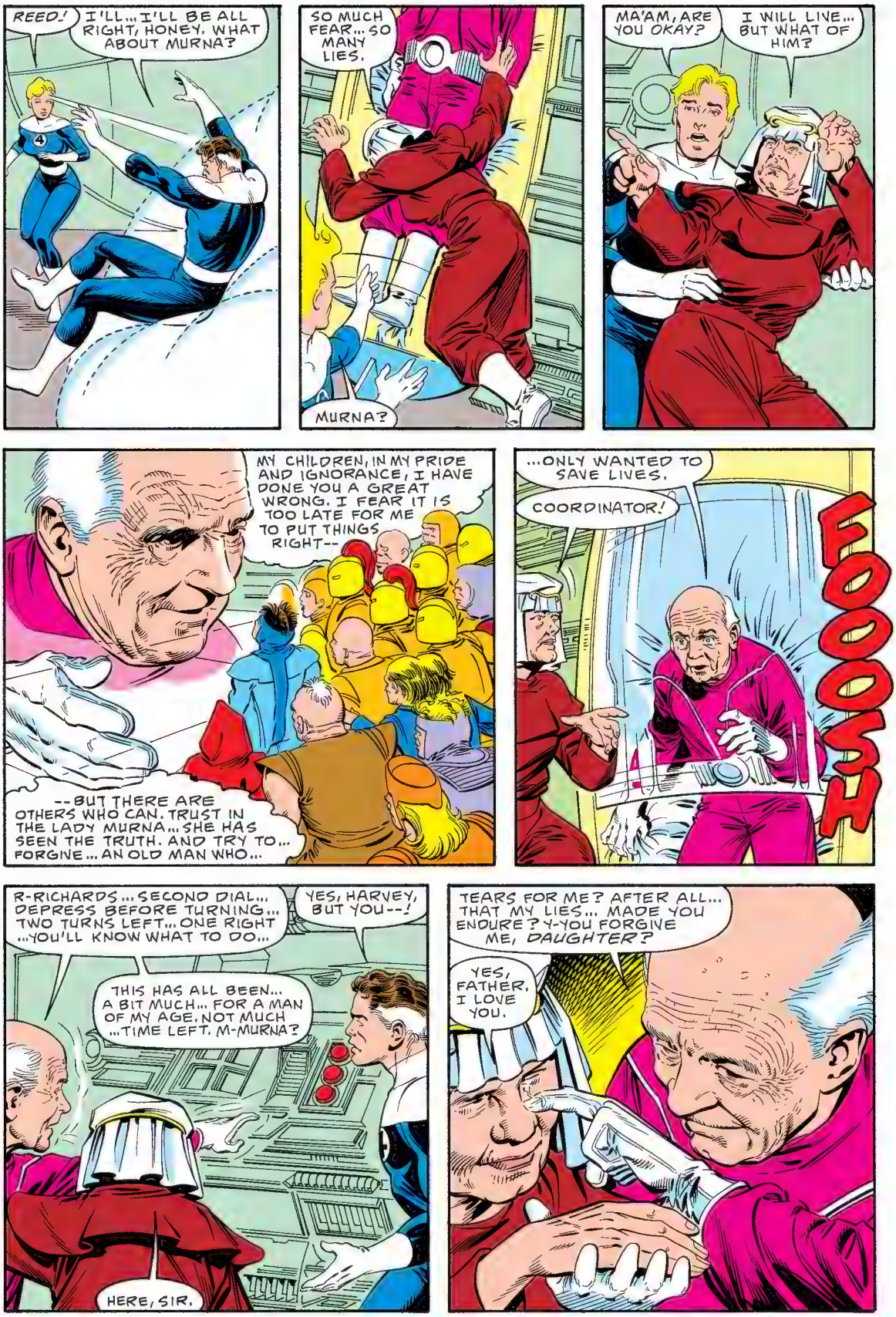
MEANWHILE, FAR BELOW THE OLD CITY...
THIS IS IT? AND YOU'RE SURE THERE ARE NO BOOBY TRAPS?
THERE ARE NONE.
THEN, STAND BACK ...THIS SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG!
OKAY, WATCH YOUR STEP AROUND THAT DOOR.
SAY, WYATT, HOW'S YOUR KISSING?
WHAT?! WHY--?
'CAUSE I'VE JUST FOUND YOUR SLEEPING BEAUTY!
SHE'S SO DEATHLY STILL!
HER LIFE CELL APPEARS UNDISTURBED. REVIVAL SHOULD TAKE JUST A MOMENT...
KLK
"...IF ALL GOES WELL."
JENNIFER?
WYATT?
OH, BABY, ARE YOU EVER A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES! YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH! HOW'D YOU FIND ME?
THAT'S A LONG STORY. UNGH EASY ON THE RIBS!
I HATE TO BREAK UP A HAPPY REUNION, BUT WE'RE NOT ALONE HERE!

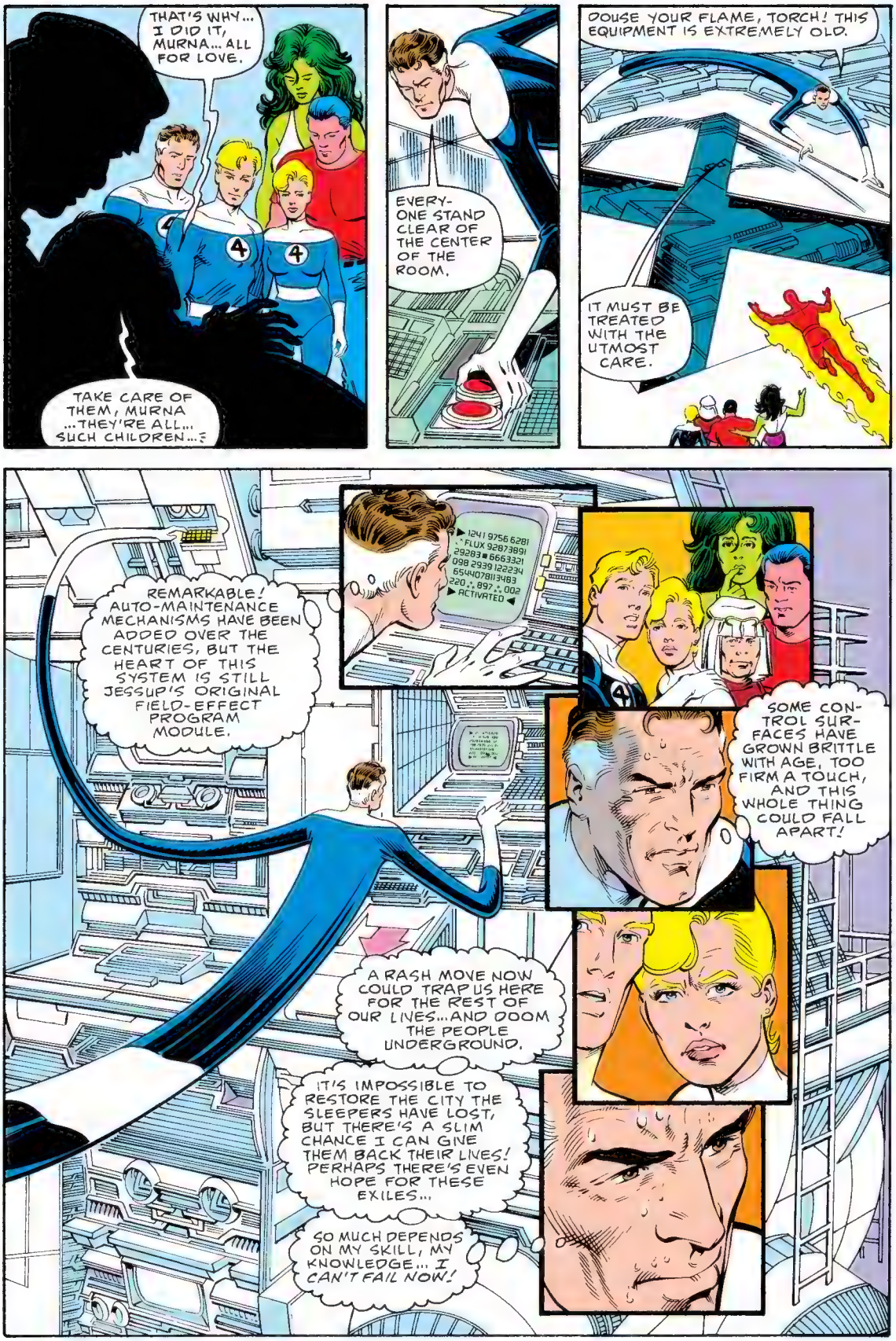
LOOKS LIKE THE SHE-HULK HAD A FEW THOUSAND BUNKMATES! WHO ARE THESE FOLKS? FROM THE LOOKS OF 'EM, THEY SURE AS HECK AREN'T EXILES!
THESE CAN ONLY BE THE FABLED PROGENITORS THE COORDINATOR ONCE SPOKE OF... THE ORIGINAL PEOPLE OF THE CITY!
PROGENITORS? COORDINATOR?
HAVE I MISSED SOME-THING?
IN THE UPPER CITY...
THIS IS DOING NO GOOD. WE MUST GET BACK INTO JESSUP'S CHAMBERS.
I CAN HOLD THEM OFF FOR NOW, REED--
--BUT NOT FOREVER! NOT A WHOLE CITY!
IT NEEDN'T BE FOREVER, IF I CAN JUST SLIP THROUGH THE JOINT IN THIS SECURITY DOOR--!

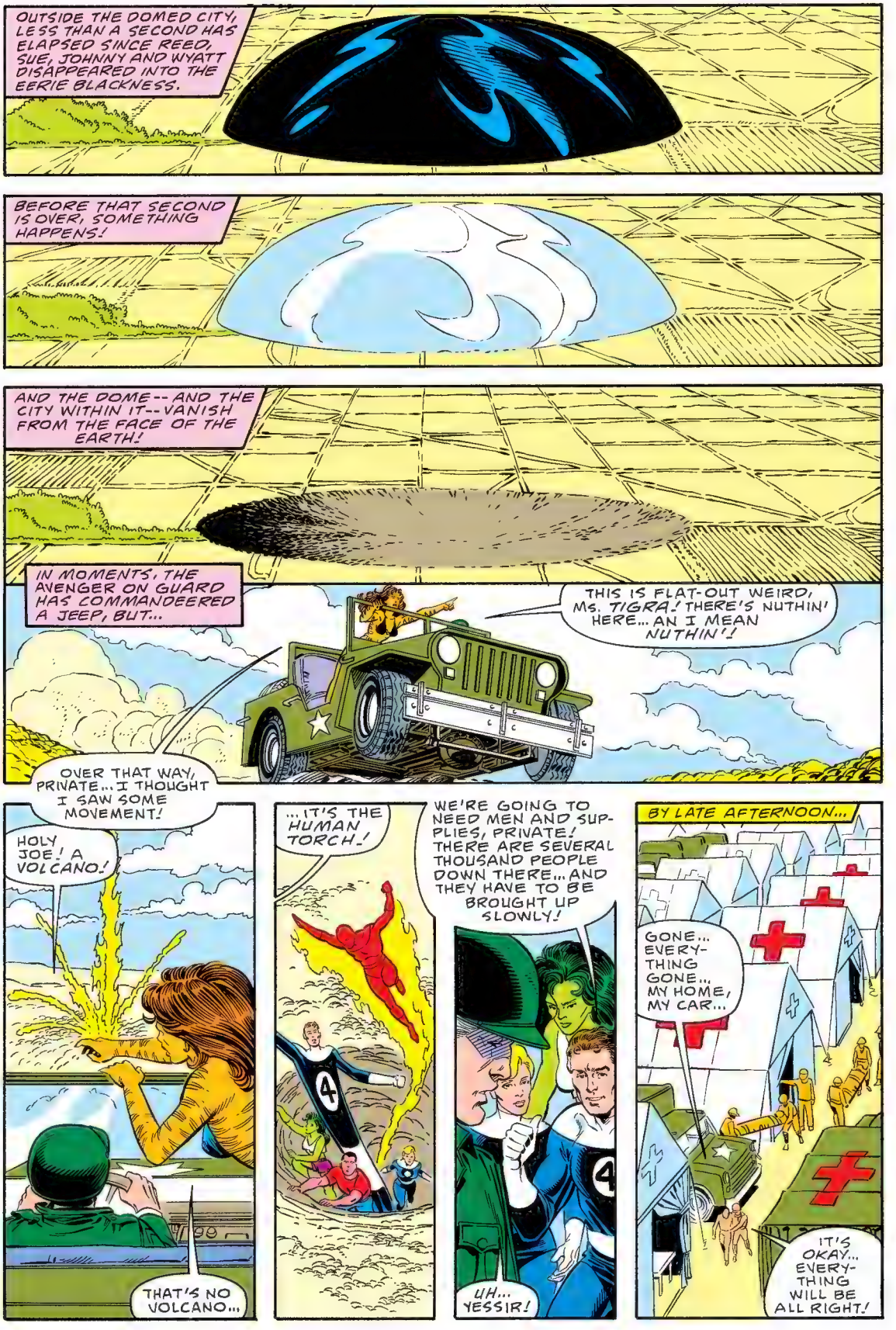

BLAST! THIS IS NO GOOD, EITHER! THE SEAL IS TOO INTRICATE... IT COULD TAKE ME DAYS TO PENETRATE!
WE'LL HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY INTO THAT CHAMBER! I'M SURE THAT... EH?
YARRGH!
ONE SIDE, BALDY-- WE'RE COMING THROUGH!
DON'T BE SHY ABOUT SWINGING THAT TRUNCHEON, LOVER--
--THESE BIG LUGS ARE EVEN TOUGHER THAN THEIR GRANDPAS WERE!
JOHNNY, SHE-HULK... THIS WAY! IF YOU'LL PART THE MOB FOR A MOMENT, I CAN DROP MY FORCE-FIELD LONG ENOUGH TO LET YOU THROUGH!
THANKS, SIS! BOY, DO WE HAVE NEWS FOR YOU!
SOON...
ALMOST THE WHOLE ORIGINAL POPULATION OF CENTRAL CITY IS DOWN THERE! THE EXILES DESCENDED FROM A FEW WHO THREW IN WITH JESSUP.
THIS PUTS A WHOLE NEW LIGHT ON THINGS, IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER...
...THAT WE GET BACK INTO JESSUP'S LAIR!
NO SWEAT, REED...

...THIS THE DOOR? JUST LET ME GET A DECENT GRIP--!
R-R-RUNK
CAREFUL, SHE-HULK! JESSUP HAS PLENTY OF WEAPONRY IN THERE!
JOHNNY, YOU GO FIRST--I'LL COVER YOU!
WHOOPS! LOOKS LIKE I'VE BROKEN ALL THESE NIFTY TOYS! SORRY ABOUT THAT, "O GREAT AND POWERFUL OZ!"
STOP THEM, MY CHILDREN... SHOW THEM NO MERCY!
AT LEAST THEY'RE EASIER TO DEAL WITH IN HERE!
DON'T HOG ALL THE FUN, SUSIE.
MURNA, CAN YOU LINK MY MIND TO THE COORDINATOR'S?
I CAN... BUT IT COULD ENDANGER YOUR PSYCHE.
I'LL TAKE THAT CHANCE! HE MUST BE MADE TO SEE WHAT HE'S DONE!
VERY WELL.

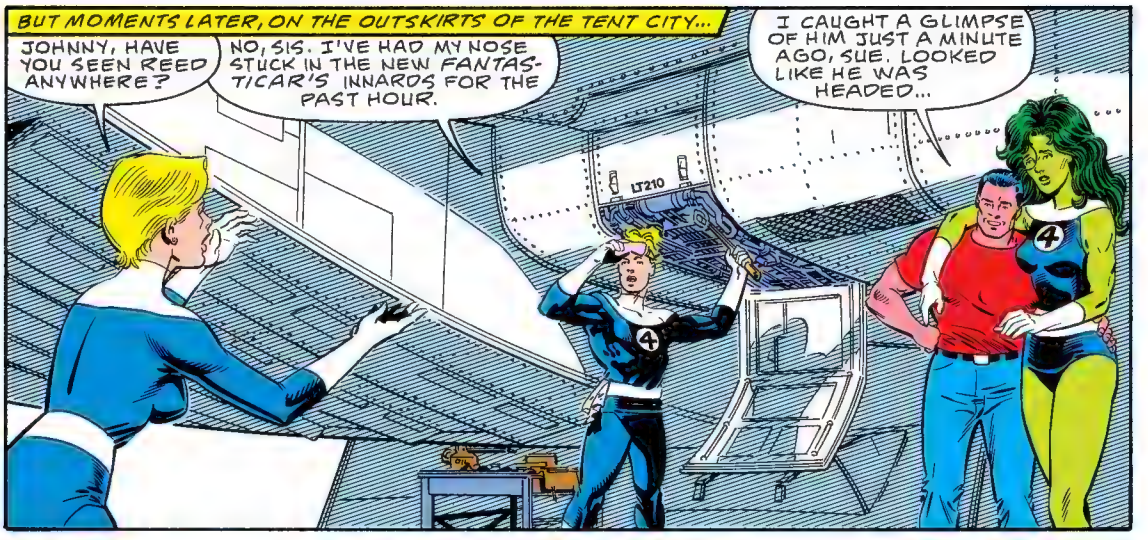
NO! CONFOUND YOU, GET AWAY!
HE RESISTS... AS I KNEW HE WOULD. HIS IS A VERY STUBBORN WILL.
YES... I CAN FEEL IT... LIKE A WALL...
CONCENTRATE... ON BREAKING ...THAT WALL!
G-GOOD LORD... I-I SEE...
...IT ALL! WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN! ...WHAT A WRETCHED FOOL! WE'VE MADE A TERRIBLE BLUNDER!
STOP FIGHTING ...ALL OF YOU!
THE BLESSED IMAGE CHANGES!
UH OH... I HOPE REED HASN'T BITTEN OFF MORE THAN HE CAN CHEW!
NO... NO MORE!


REED!
I'LL... I'LL BE ALL RIGHT, HONEY. WHAT ABOUT MURNA?
SO MUCH FEAR... SO MANY LIES.
MURNA?
MA'AM, ARE YOU OKAY?
I WILL LIVE... BUT WHAT OF HIM?
MY CHILDREN, IN MY PRIDE AND IGNORANCE, I HAVE DONE YOU A GREAT WRONG. I FEAR IT IS TOO LATE FOR ME TO PUT THINGS RIGHT--
--BUT THERE ARE OTHERS WHO CAN. TRUST IN THE LADY MURNA... SHE HAS SEEN THE TRUTH. AND TRY TO... FORGIVE... AN OLD MAN WHO...
...ONLY WANTED TO SAVE LIVES.
COORDINATOR!
FOOOSH
R-RICHARDS... SECOND DIAL... DEPRESS BEFORE TURNING... TWO TURNS LEFT... ONE RIGHT ...YOU'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO...
YES, HARVEY, BUT YOU--!
THIS HAS ALL BEEN... A BIT MUCH... FOR A MAN OF MY AGE. NOT MUCH ...TIME LEFT, M-MURNA?
HERE, SIR.
TEARS FOR ME? AFTER ALL... THAT MY LIES... MADE YOU ENDURE? Y-YOU FORGIVE ME, DAUGHTER?
YES, FATHER, I LOVE YOU.


THAT'S WHY... I DID IT, MURNA... ALL FOR LOVE.
TAKE CARE OF THEM, MURNA ...THEY'RE ALL... SUCH CHILDREN...!
EVERY-ONE STAND CLEAR OF THE CENTER OF THE ROOM.
DOUSE YOUR FLAME, TORCH! THIS EQUIPMENT IS EXTREMELY OLD.
IT MUST BE TREATED WITH THE UTMOST CARE.
REMARKABLE! AUTO-MAINTENANCE MECHANISMS HAVE BEEN ADDED OVER THE CENTURIES, BUT THE HEART OF THIS SYSTEM IS STILL JESSUP'S ORIGINAL FIELD-EFFECT PROGRAM MODULE.
ACTIVATED
SOME CON-TROL SUR-FACES HAVE GROWN BRITTLE WITH AGE, TOO FIRM A TOUCH, AND THIS WHOLE THING COULD FALL APART!
A RASH MOVE NOW COULD TRAP US HERE FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES...AND DOOM THE PEOPLE UNDERGROUND.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO RESTORE THE CITY THE SLEEPERS HAVE LOST, BUT THERE'S A SLIM CHANCE I CAN GIVE THEM BACK THEIR LIVES! PERHAPS THERE'S EVEN HOPE FOR THESE EXILES...
SO MUCH DEPENDS ON MY SKILL, MY KNOWLEDGE... I CAN'T FAIL NOW!


OUTSIDE THE DOMED CITY, LESS THAN A SECOND HAS ELAPSED SINCE REED, SUE, JOHNNY AND WYATT DISAPPEARED INTO THE EERIE BLACKNESS.
BEFORE THAT SECOND IS OVER, SOMETHING HAPPENS!
AND THE DOME--AND THE CITY WITHIN IT--VANISH FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH!
IN MOMENTS, THE AVENGER ON GUARD HAS COMMANDEERED A JEEP, BUT...
THIS IS FLAT-OUT WEIRD, MS. TIGRA! THERE'S NUTHIN' HERE... AN I MEAN NUTHIN'!
OVER THAT WAY, PRIVATE... I THOUGHT I SAW SOME MOVEMENT!
HOLY JOE! A VOLCANO!
THAT'S NO VOLCANO...
...IT'S THE HUMAN TORCH!
WE'RE GOING TO NEED MEN AND SUPPLIES, PRIVATE! THERE ARE SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE DOWN THERE... AND THEY HAVE TO BE BROUGHT UP SLOWLY!
UH... YESSIR!
BY LATE AFTERNOON...
GONE... EVERYTHING GONE... MY HOME, MY CAR...
IT'S OKAY... EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT!

JESSUP HAD PUT THE ENTIRE POPULATION INTO SUSPENDED ANIMATION, DR. RICHARDS?
YES, GENERAL HAMILTON... EXCEPT FOR FIFTY OR SO TECHNICIANS WHO BOUGHT IN TO HIS PLAN.
JESSUP KNEW THAT SOMETHING HAD GONE AWRY WITH HIS DEVICE, BUT HE WAS AFRAID TO DEACTIVATE IT, FOR FEAR OF EXPOSING THE CITY TO A RADIOACTIVE WASTELAND.
BUT THE CITY, MAN ...WHERE DID IT ALL GO?
IT SHIFTED OUT OF SYNC WITH TIME. JESSUP'S DEVICE HAD SO DETERIORATED THAT I COULDN'T DO MUCH MORE THAN CORRECT THE ORIGINAL MALFUNCTION.
IT TOOK CONSIDERABLE EFFORT SIMPLY TO CREATE A SHEARING FACTOR IN THE DOME'S FIELD TO RETURN THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBERS TO NORMAL TIME.
REED MEANS THAT THE CITY WAS SENT TO THE FUTURE, GENERAL.
THE FUTURE?!?
YES, IT WILL REAPPEAR IN TEN THOUSAND YEARS...
...TO THE EXILES, THE TIME SHIFT WILL SEEM TO TAKE ONLY A FEW DAYS. PERHAPS IN THAT DISTANT FUTURE, THEY WILL NO LONGER BE EXILES.
WELL, AT LEAST YOU SAVED SEVERAL THOUSAND LIVES--AND WE'RE VERY GRATEFUL FOR THAT. OF COURSE, MY HANDS ARE GOING TO BE FULL THE NEXT FEW MONTHS...
...YOU DO REALIZE THAT WE MUST KEEP A LID ON THIS, MEDIA-WISE?
I... UNDERSTAND
OUR OFFICIAL COVER STORY WILL BE THAT--!
DR. RICHARDS?
YOU MUST EXCUSE ME ...I NEED SOME AIR.
OF COURSE.
OH, MRS. RICHARDS--
--I'LL NEED A SIGNATURE ON YOUR STATEMENT.
YOUR HUSBAND SEEMED A BIT... UNSETTLED.
I'M SURE REED'S FINE.


BUT MOMENTS LATER, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE TENT CITY...
JOHNNY, HAVE YOU SEEN REED ANYWHERE?
NO, SIS. I'VE HAD MY NOSE STUCK IN THE NEW FANTASTICAR'S INNARDS FOR THE PAST HOUR.
I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF HIM JUST A MINUTE AGO, SUE. LOOKED LIKE HE WAS HEADED...
LT210

"FOR THE RIM OF THE CRATER."
REED, WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?
SO MANY THINGS, DEAR... SO MANY MISTAKES. JESSUP WAS RIGHT TO FEAR THE POSSIBILITIES OF WAR--BUT INSTEAD OF TRYING TO PREVENT WAR HE JUST BUILT A BETTER HOLE IN WHICH TO HIDE.

THEN, HE PULLED A WHOLE CITY IN TO HIDE WITH HIM. HE THOUGHT HE WAS DOING WHAT WAS BEST FOR THEM...
...JUST AS I THOUGHT I WAS DOING WHAT WAS BEST FOR THE THING, WHEN I DIDN'T TELL HIM ABOUT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BLOCK THAT KEPT HIM FROM BECOMING BEN GRIMM.*
*in issue 245.

I DOOMED MY BEST FRIEND TO BEING A MISSHAPEN MONSTER FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE.
AND FROM WHAT THE SHE-HULK HAS LEARNED, SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS HAPPENED TO HIM!

EVIDENTLY, BEN WAS IN A LOS ANGELES HOSPITAL, SUFFERING FROM SOME STRANGE MALADY, BUT NOW HE'S DISAPPEARED.
HE'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE... ALONE... MAYBE IN PAIN... AND I'M PARTLY TO BLAME.
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN HELP HIM, SUE, BUT I HAVE TO TRY. WHEREVER HE IS, WE MUST FIND THE THING!

Next: OUR SILVER ANNIVERSARY EXTRAVAGANZA! "Return to MONSTER Island!"

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Fantastic Four®

FROM THE VAST POOL OF MARVEL TALENT WAS DRAWN A HANDFUL OF ARTISTS WHOSE NOBLE TASK IT THEN BECAME TO COMMEMORATE 25 YEARS OF CHRONICLING THE EXPLOITS, THE LOVES AND THE LIVES OF THAT MOST VENERABLE QUARTET, THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

PAGES	PENCILS	INKS
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6–10	BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH & KERRY GAMMILL	VINCE COLLETTA & BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH
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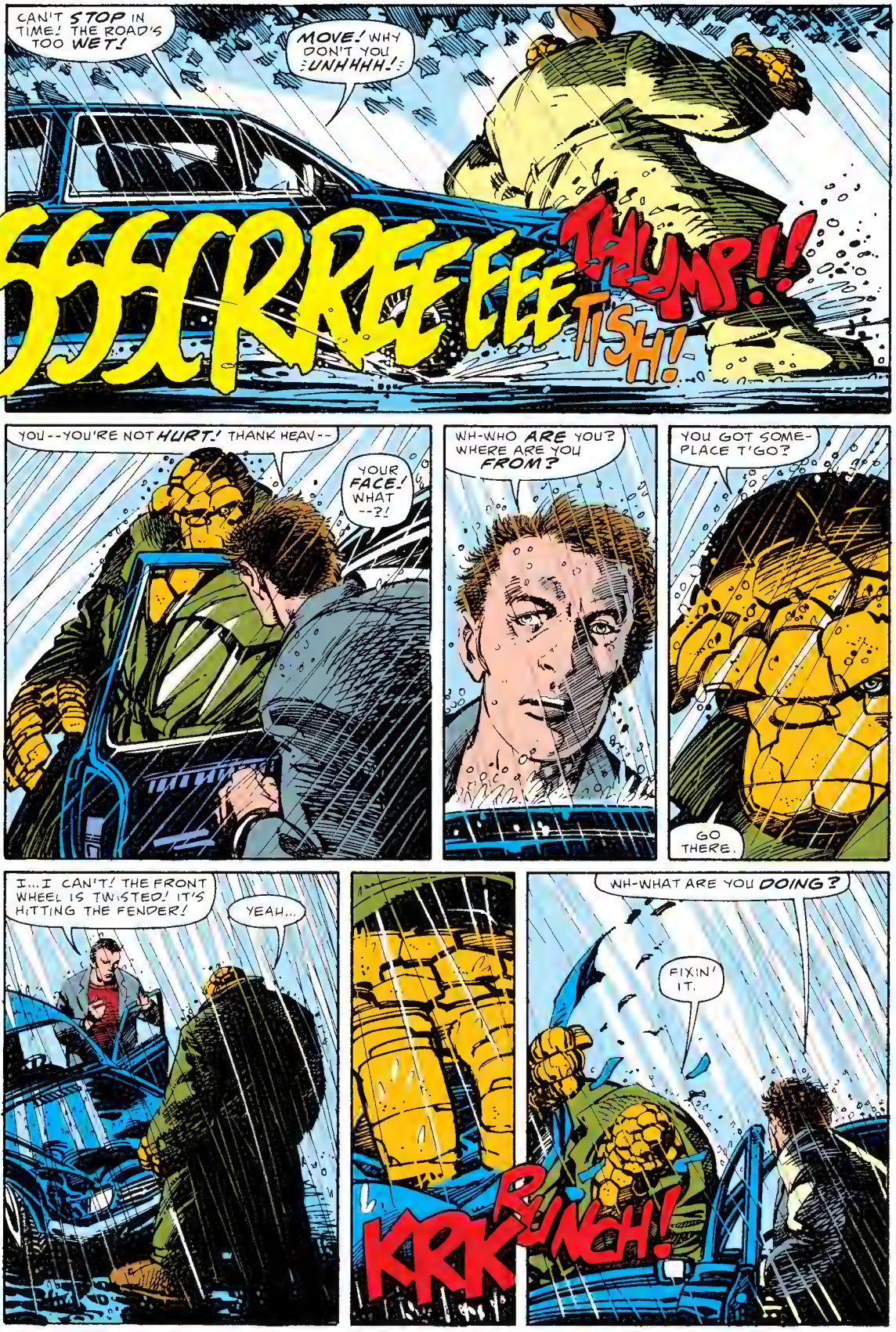
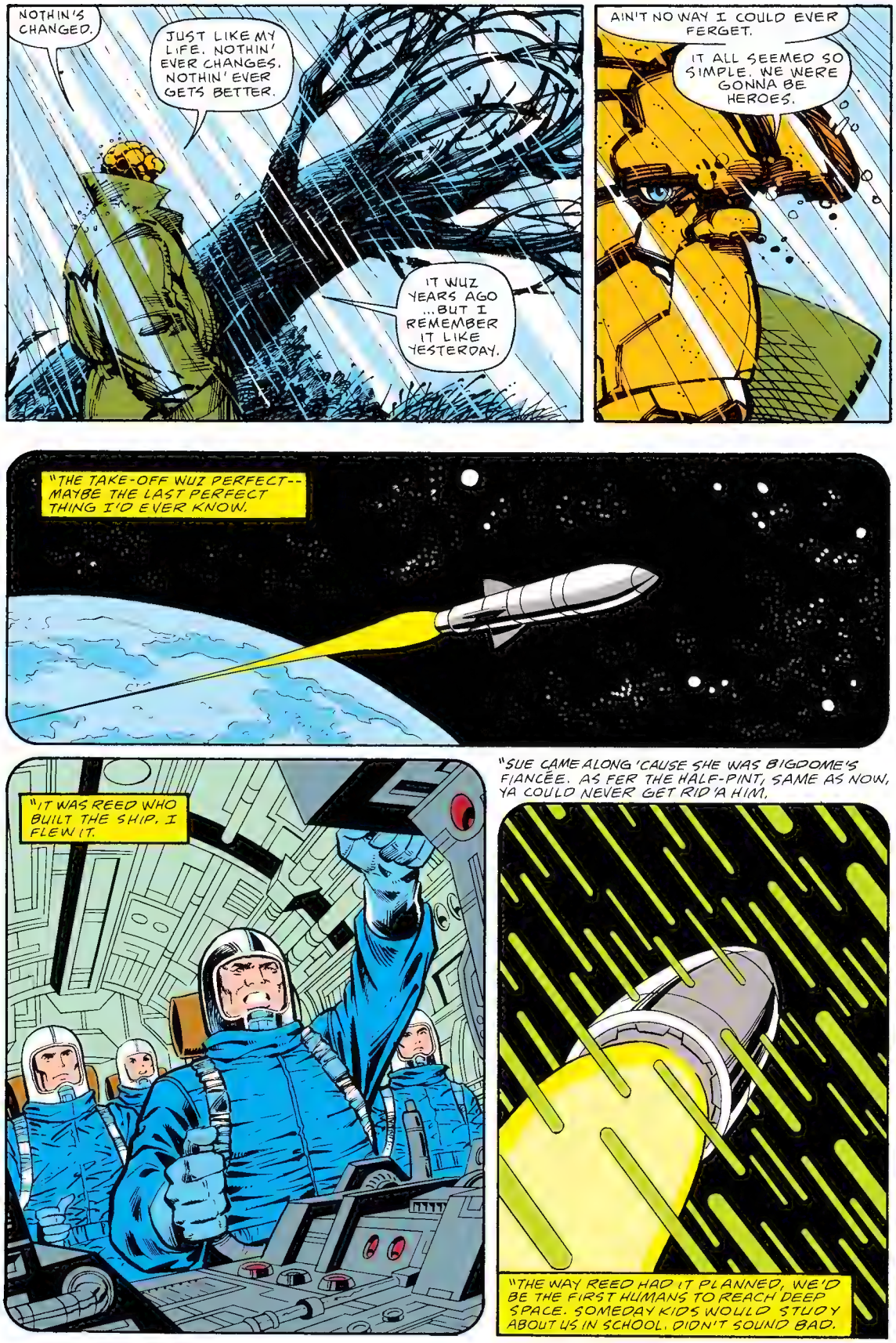
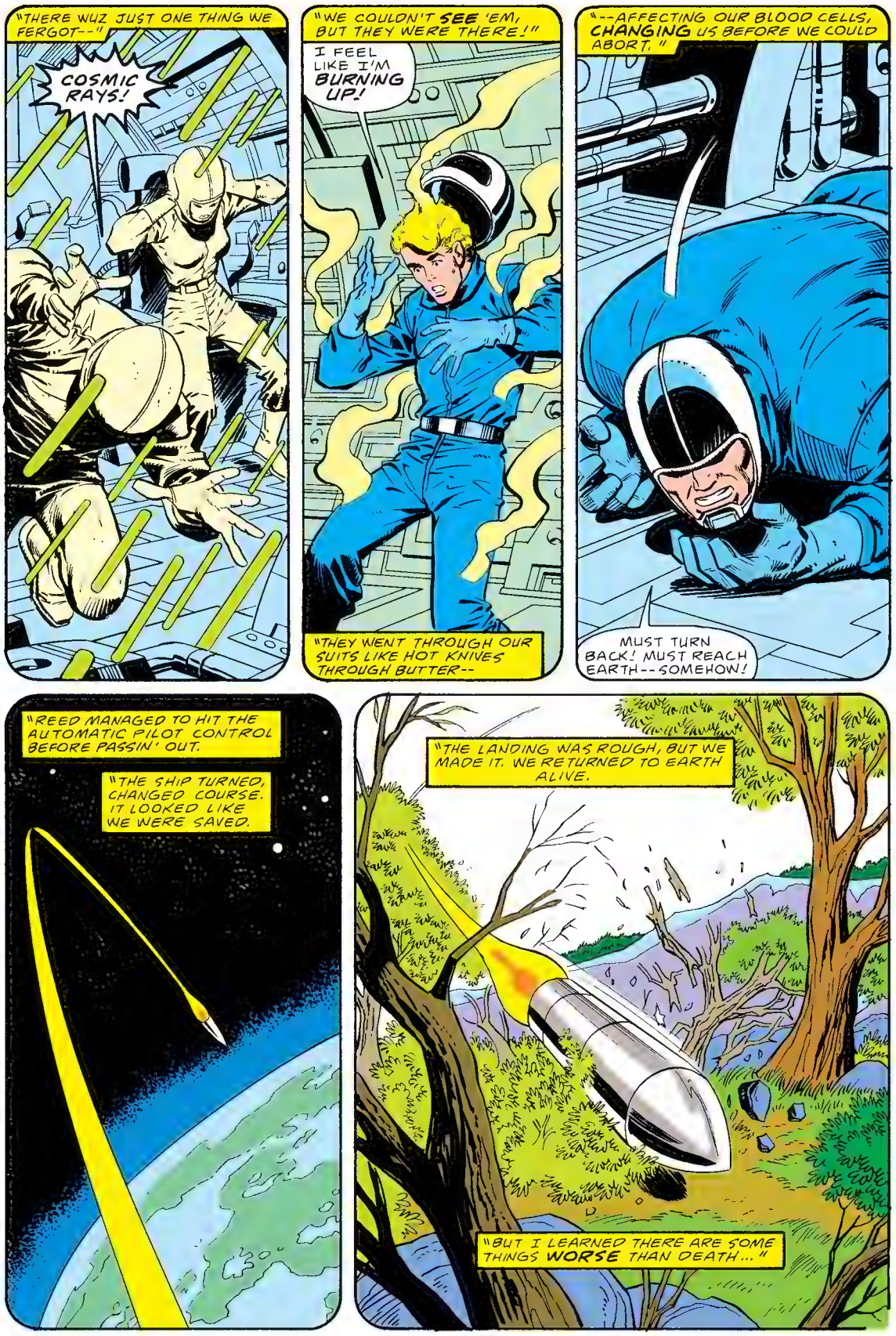
PLOTTER—JIM SHOOTER
SCRIPT—STAN LEE
LETTERER—JOHN WORKMAN
COLORIST—GLYNIS OLIVER
EDITOR—MIKE CARLIN
EDITOR IN CHIEF—JIM SHOOTER

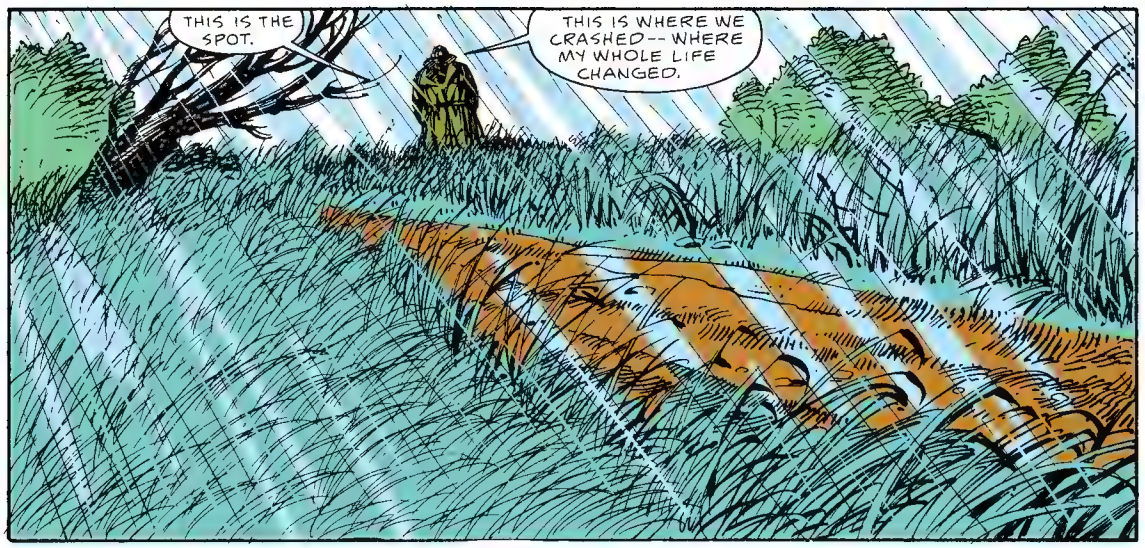
HOMECOMING!
NIGHT. A MASSIVE FIGURE SLOWLY LUMBERS ACROSS A RAINSWEPT ROAD. THE THUNDER ROARS. HE DOESN'T HEAR. THE LIGHTNING FLASHES. HE DOESN'T SEE.
HIS AGONIZED THOUGHTS ARE MIRED IN THE DIM AND TORTURED PAST.
HONK
HONK
WELCOME
TO
STOCKTON

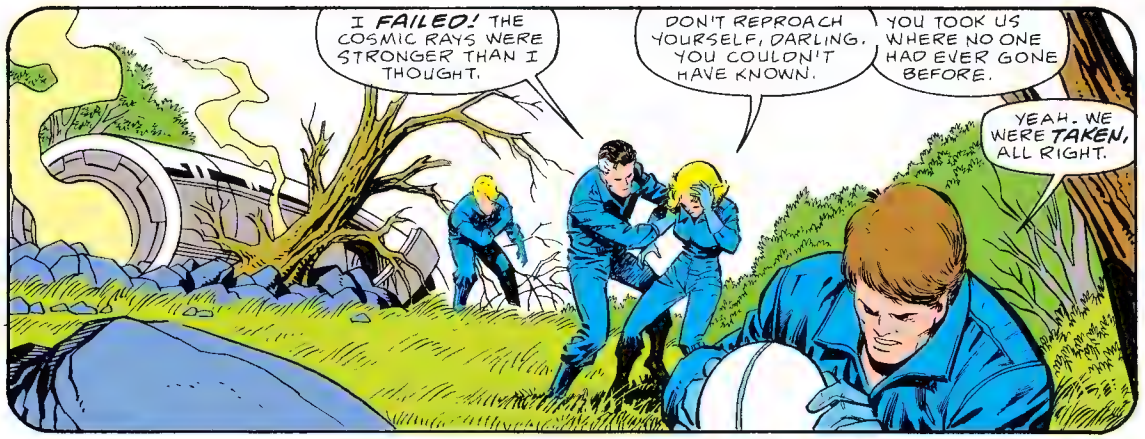

CAN'T STOP IN TIME! THE ROAD'S TOO WET!
MOVE! WHY DON'T YOU
UNHHHH!
SSSCRREEEEE
THUMP!!
TISH!
YOU--YOU'RE NOT HURT! THANK HEAV--
YOUR FACE! WHAT--?!
WH-WHO ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
YOU GOT SOME-PLACE T'GO?
GO THERE.
I...I CAN'T! THE FRONT WHEEL IS TWISTED! IT'S HITTING THE FENDER!
YEAH...
KRK
RUNCH!
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
FIXIN' IT.

NOTHIN'S HITTIN' THE WHEEL NOW.
I... I SEE.
WELL? WHATCHA GAWKIN' AT?
ANYTHIN' ELSE YA WANT?
BRMBRM!
VRMM!
NOOOOOOO!
SSSCREEEEEEEEEEE
AGAIN THE MOROSE FIGURE TURNS AND TRUDGES TOWARDS THE HILLSIDE...
STOCK
...HIS FOOTSTEPS AS LEADEN AND HEAVY AS THE ACHE WITHIN HIS BREAST.
FINALLY, PUSHING THROUGH A THICKET, HE COMES TO A SMALL CLEARING...
IT'S -- JUST LIKE I REMEMBERED IT.


NOTHIN'S CHANGED.
JUST LIKE MY LIFE. NOTHIN' EVER CHANGES. NOTHIN' EVER GETS BETTER.
IT WUZ YEARS AGO ...BUT I REMEMBER IT LIKE YESTERDAY.
AIN'T NO WAY I COULD EVER FERGET.
IT ALL SEEMED SO SIMPLE. WE WERE GONNA BE HEROES.
"THE TAKE-OFF WUZ PERFECT-- MAYBE THE LAST PERFECT THING I'D EVER KNOW.
"IT WAS REED WHO BUILT THE SHIP, I FLEW IT.
"SUE CAME ALONG 'CAUSE SHE WAS BIGDOME'S FIANCÉE. AS FER THE HALF-PINT, SAME AS NOW, YA COULD NEVER GET RID'A HIM.
"THE WAY REED HAD IT PLANNED, WE'D BE THE FIRST HUMANS TO REACH DEEP SPACE. SOMEDAY KIDS WOULD STUDY ABOUT US IN SCHOOL. DIDN'T SOUND BAD.

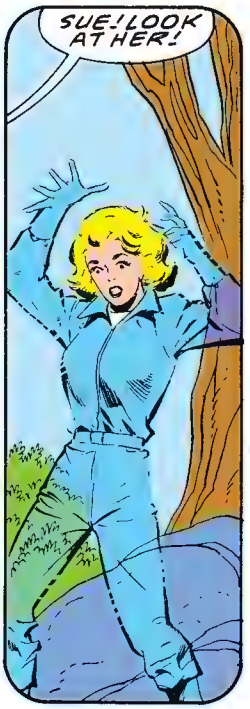

"THERE WUZ JUST ONE THING WE FERGOT--"
COSMIC RAYS!
"WE COULDN'T SEE 'EM, BUT THEY WERE THERE!"
I FEEL LIKE I'M BURNING UP!
"THEY WENT THROUGH OUR SUITS LIKE HOT KNIVES THROUGH BUTTER--
"--AFFECTING OUR BLOOD CELLS, CHANGING US BEFORE WE COULD ABORT."
MUST TURN BACK! MUST REACH EARTH--SOMEHOW!
"REED MANAGED TO HIT THE AUTOMATIC PILOT CONTROL BEFORE PASSIN' OUT.
"THE SHIP TURNED, CHANGED COURSE. IT LOOKED LIKE WE WERE SAVED.
"THE LANDING WAS ROUGH, BUT WE MADE IT. WE RETURNED TO EARTH ALIVE.
"BUT I LEARNED THERE ARE SOME THINGS WORSE THAN DEATH..."


THIS IS THE SPOT.
THIS IS WHERE WE CRASHED-- WHERE MY WHOLE LIFE CHANGED.


I FAILED! THE COSMIC RAYS WERE STRONGER THAN I THOUGHT.
DON'T REPROACH YOURSELF, DARLING. YOU COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN.
YOU TOOK US WHERE NO ONE HAD EVER GONE BEFORE.
YEAH. WE WERE TAKEN, ALL RIGHT.

IT'S NOT OVER YET. WE STILL DON'T KNOW HOW THE COSMIC RAYS MAY HAVE AFFECTED US.

REED--I FEEL SO STRANGE...

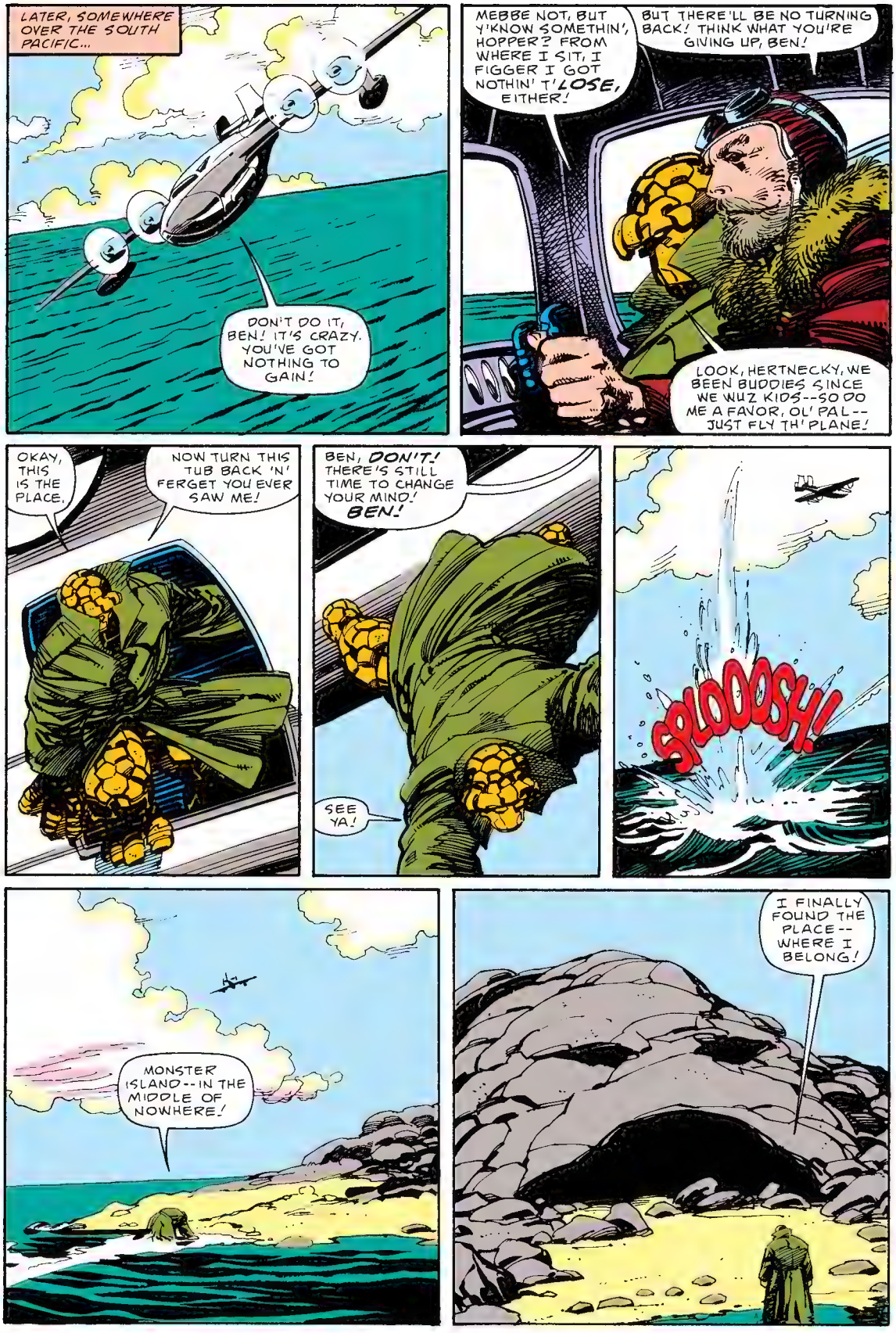

SUE! LOOK AT HER!

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME? NO! NO! I MUST BE GOING MAD!

IT'S THE RAYS, JUST AS I FEARED! THEY'VE ALTERED YOUR MOLECULAR STRUCTURE--TURNING YOU INVISIBLE!
YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE LECTURIN' IN SCHOOL!
THAT'S THE GIRL YER SUPPOSED TO LOVE!
I LOVE HER MORE THAN LIFE, BEN, BUT PANIC NEVER SOLVED ANY--
LOOK!
I'M MYSELF AGAIN!
THANK HEAVEN! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, MY DARLING!
ALL RIGHT, HUH? HOW DO YOU KNOW, WISE GUY? HOW DO YOU KNOW SHE WON'T TURN INVISIBLE AGAIN?
AND HOW O'YA KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO THE REST OF US?
BEN, YOUR ANGRY WORDS AREN'T GOING TO GET US ANYWHERE! I DIDN'T PURPOSELY CAUSE OUR FLIGHT TO FAIL!
I'M SICK OF LISTENING TO YOU AND YOUR WORDS, PAL! I'M GONNA PASTE YOU ONE RIGHT IN THAT SMUG FACE OF YOURS!
BEN, STOP! WAIT! LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU!
YOU'RE--CHANGING!
YA CAN'T TALK YER WAY OUT OF IT, MISTER! I'M GONNA MOP UP THE PLACE WITH YA!
REED--RUN, DARLING! HE'S CHANGED! HE'S TURNED INTO SOME SORT OF--THING! HE'S STRONG AS AN OX!
DARLIN', HUH? CRIPES, HOW CAN YOU CARE FOR THAT WEAKLING WHEN I'M HERE?!!
HE AIN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR YA! HE NEVER WUZ!
K'KRAK

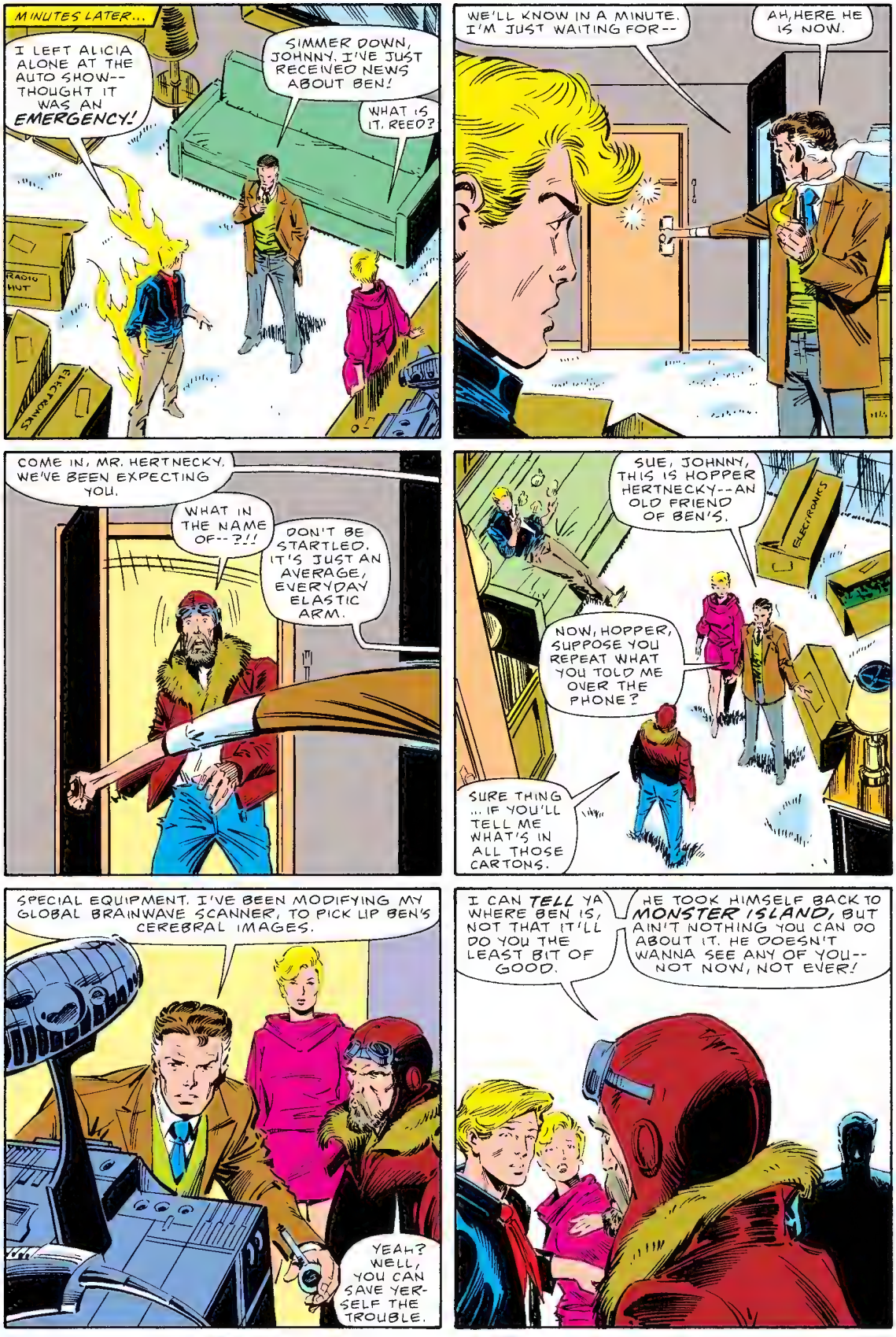
I'LL PROVE TO YOU THAT YOU LOVE THE WRONG MAN! I'LL--HEY! WHAT--??
NO, YOU DON'T!
YOU'VE HAD THIS COMING FOR A LONG TIME, BEN!
NO, REED, NO!
NOT YOU! NOT YOU, TOO!
WHAT AM I DOING? WHAT HAPPENED TO ME? TO ALL OF US?
YOU'VE TURNED INTO MONSTERS --BOTH OF YOU!
IT'S THE COSMIC RAYS!
HOLY JOE! NOW I KNOW WHY I'VE BEEN FEELING SO WARM. THEY'VE AFFECTED ME, TOO! WHEN I GET EXCITED, I CAN FEEL MY BODY START TO BLAZE!
AND LOOK! I'M LIGHTER THAN AIR! I CAN FLY! WOW--I CAN FLY!
THEN--THE RAYS CHANGED ALL OF US!
AND EACH IN A DIFFERENT WAY!
IT CAN'T BE JUST A CASUAL ACCIDENT. IT'S TOO FANTASTIC, TOO AWESOME!
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, REED. IT'S ALMOST AS IF IT WERE-- PRE-ORDAINED!

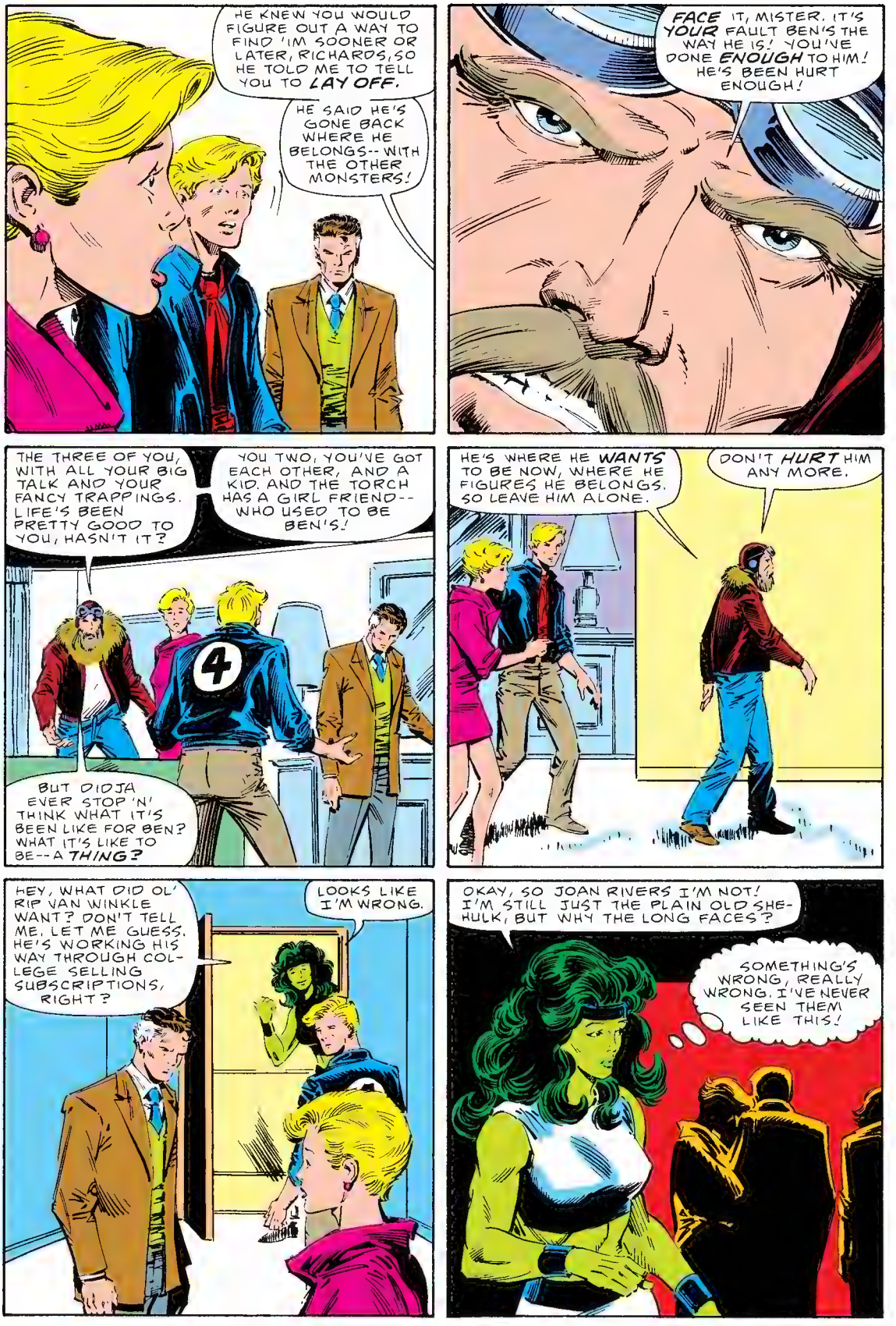
LISTEN TO ME, ALL OF YOU. THAT MEANS YOU, TOO, BEN. TOGETHER, WE HAVE MORE POWER THAN ANY HUMANS HAVE EVER POSSESSED!
YOU DON'T HAVETA MAKE A SPEECH, BIG SHOT. WE UNDERSTAND. WE'VE GOTTA USE THAT POWER TO HELP MANKIND, RIGHT?
RIGHT, BEN! RIGHT!
I'M CALLING MYSELF THE HUMAN TORCH --AND I'M WITH YOU ALL THE WAY!
SAME GOES FOR ME--THE INVISIBLE GIRL!
THERE'S ONLY ONE STILL MISSING... BEN!
I AIN'T BEN ANY-MORE! I'M WHAT SUSAN CALLED ME-- THE THING!
AND I'LL CALL MYSELF-- MISTER FANTASTIC!
EVER SINCE THEN THE OTHERS HAD FAME AND GLORY! THEY LED NEARLY NORMAL LIVES...
OKAY, MEBBE I HAD MY SHARE 'A FAME, TOO, BUT WHAT DOES IT MATTER?
AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS--I'M STILL THE ONLY ONE WHO'S A WALK-IN', BREATHIN' MONSTER --SOME KINDA LIVIN' JOKE!
MUST I ALWAYS BE NOTHING MORE THAN--A THING?

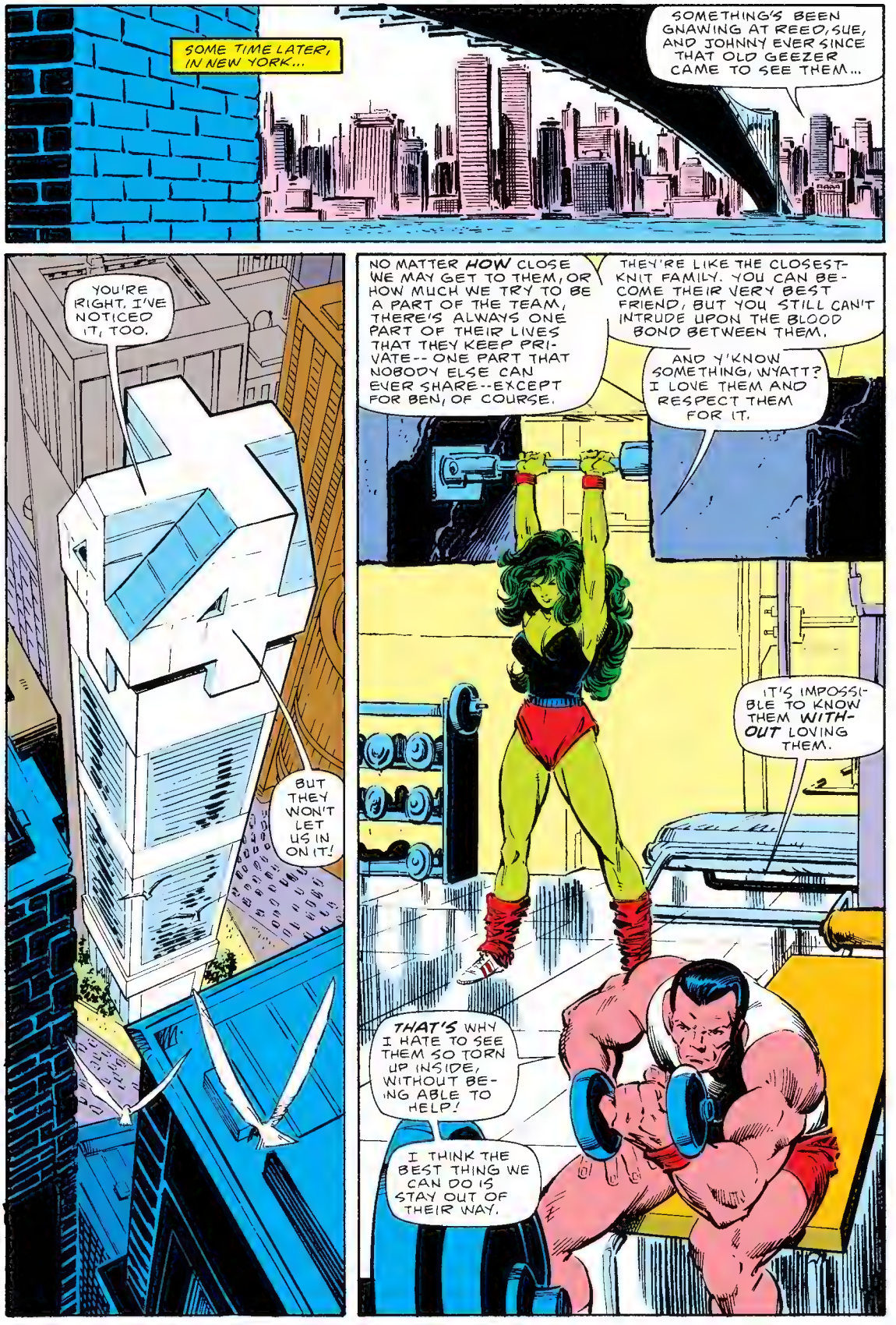

LATER, SOMEWHERE OVER THE SOUTH PACIFIC...
DON'T DO IT, BEN! IT'S CRAZY. YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO GAIN!
MEBBE NOT, BUT Y'KNOW SOMETHIN', HOPPER? FROM WHERE I SIT, I FIGGER I GOT NOTHIN' T'LOSE, EITHER!
BUT THERE'LL BE NO TURNING BACK! THINK WHAT YOU'RE GIVING UP, BEN!
LOOK, HERTNECKY, WE BEEN BUDDIES SINCE WE WUZ KIDS--SO DO ME A FAVOR, OL' PAL-- JUST FLY TH' PLANE!
OKAY, THIS IS THE PLACE.
NOW TURN THIS TUB BACK 'N' FERGET YOU EVER SAW ME!
BEN, DON'T! THERE'S STILL TIME TO CHANGE YOUR MIND! BEN!
SEE YA!
SPLOOOSH!
MONSTER ISLAND--IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE!
I FINALLY FOUND THE PLACE-- WHERE I BELONG!

LOS ANGELES, LAND OF SUNSHINE, SUN TANS--AND SUDDEN SURPRISE!
4
LOOK! UP THERE-- THE FANTASTIC FOUR SIGNAL!
WOW! THAT MEANS TROUBLE FOR SOMEONE!
I TRY NOT TO FIRE OUR EMERGENCY FLARE UNLESS IT'S IMPORTANT!
THIS TIME, I FEEL ITS USE IS EMINENTLY JUSTIFIED!
IN BEVERLY HILLS, SUE RICHARDS IS ATTENDING A CHARITY FUND RAISER...
IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE A WOMAN WHO NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION.
SHE POSSESSES THAT RAREST COMBINATION OF BEAUTY, BRAINS, AND BOUNDLESS COURAGE.
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MAY I PRESENT OUR GLAMOROUS GUEST SPEAKER--!
MRS. RICHARDS, WHAT'S WRONG?
OUR FLARE SIGNAL!
I'LL MAKE MY MESSAGE SHORT AND SWEET--
GIVE TILL IT HURTS!
?!
'BYE!
WITH NO LEADS ON BEN'S WHEREABOUTS, I THOUGHT I'D HAVE TIME TO DO MY BIT FOR CHARITY...
BUT NOW IT'LL HAVE TO WAIT!

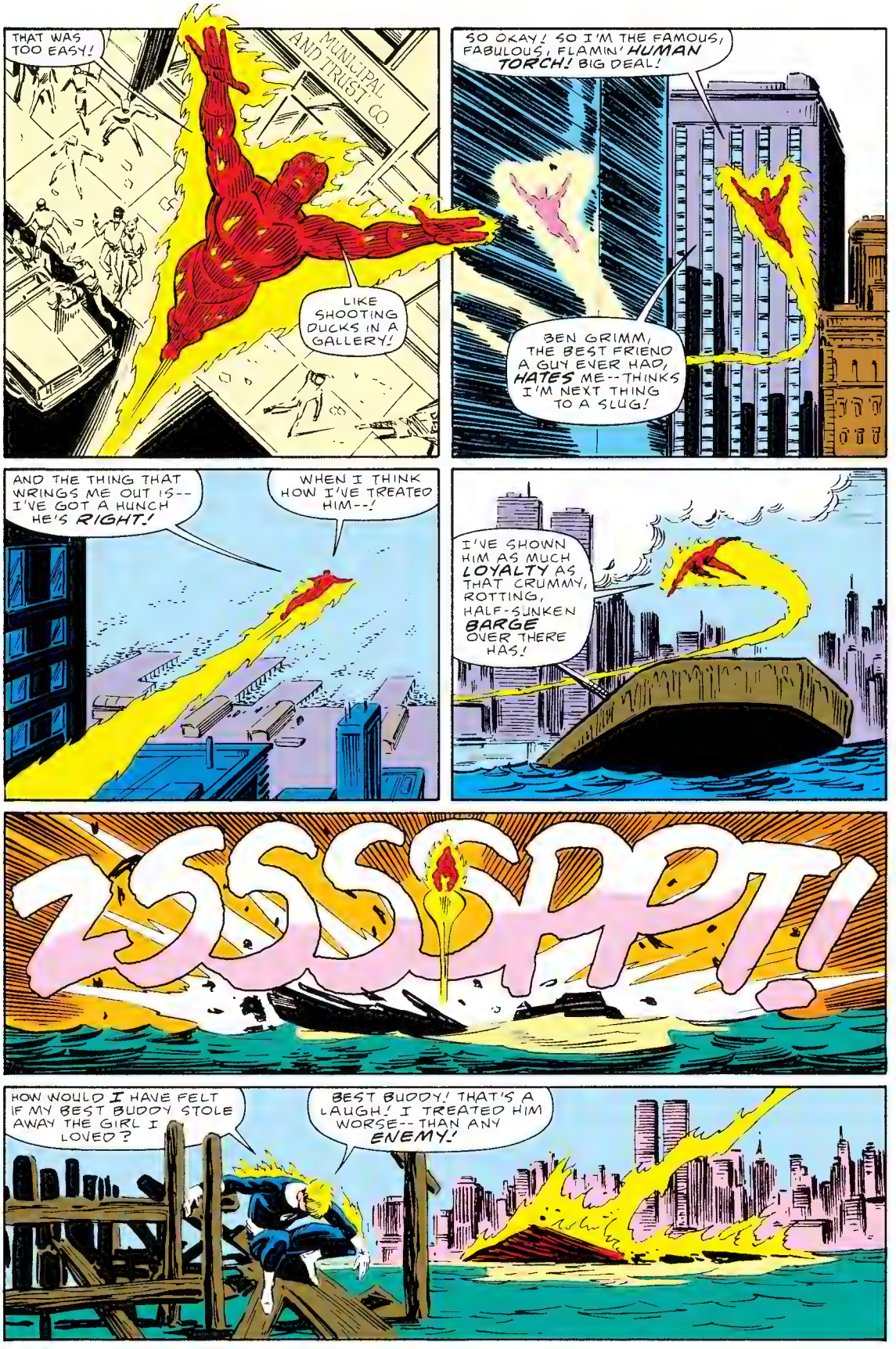
AT ONE OF THE INNUMERABLE AUTO SHOWS IN GREATER LOS ANGELES...
WOW, YOU OUGHTTA GET A LOAD OF SOME OF THESE DYNAMITE CHARIOTS, ALICIA! THEY'RE ENOUGH TO MAKE YOUR EYES POP RIGHT OUT OF--
I'M AFRAID I'LL HAVE TO RELY UPON YOUR DESCRIPTIONS, MY DARLING.
AWW, HEY! HONEY, I'M SORRY! I DIDN'T THINK OF WHAT I WAS SAYING.
DON'T APOLOGIZE, JOHNNY. I LOVE HEARING YOU DESCRIBE THE AUTOS. ANYWAY, JUST BEING HERE WITH YOU IS PLEASURE ENOUGH.
YEAH, BUT I CAN'T HELP FEELING KIND'A GUILTY BEING HERE. I SHOULD BE OUT SEARCHING FOR BEN. I CAN'T KEEP PUTTING IT OFF.
I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT SOMETIMES I THINK I DON'T REALLY WANT TO FIND HIM.
AND Y'KNOW WHY? IT'S BECAUSE OF--YOU!
BEFORE ALICIA CAN REPLY...
OUTSIDE! IN THE SKY! A GIANT FLARE--THE FANTASTIC FOUR DANGER SIGNAL!
ALICIA!
YOU MUST GO, JOHNNY! I'LL TAKE A TAXI HOME!
FLAME ON!

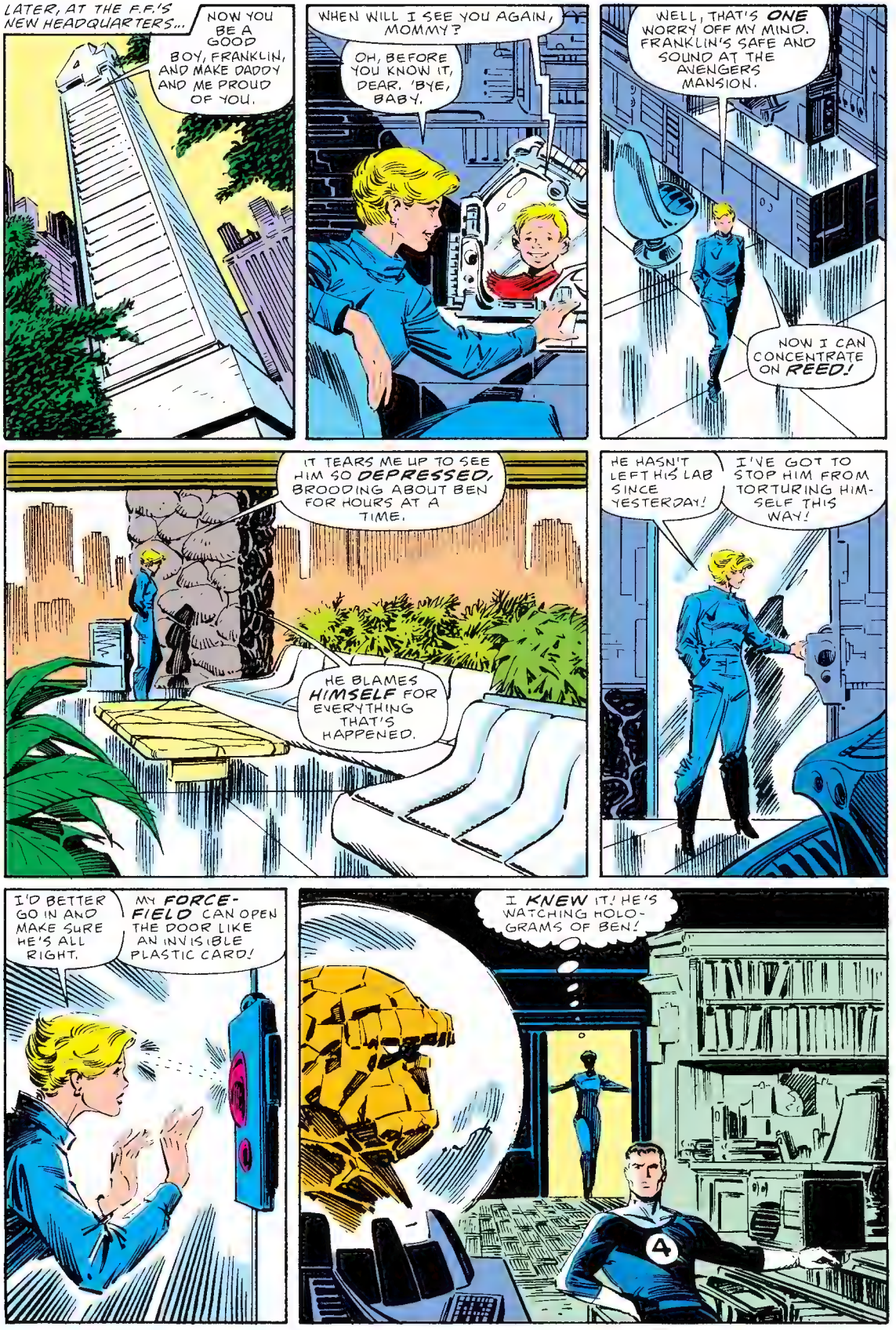

MINUTES LATER...
I LEFT ALICIA ALONE AT THE AUTO SHOW-- THOUGHT IT WAS AN EMERGENCY!
SIMMER DOWN, JOHNNY. I'VE JUST RECEIVED NEWS ABOUT BEN!
WHAT IS IT, REED?
RADIO HUT
ELECTRONICS
WE'LL KNOW IN A MINUTE. I'M JUST WAITING FOR--
AH, HERE HE IS NOW.
COME IN, MR. HERTNECKY. WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
WHAT IN THE NAME OF--?!!
DON'T BE STARTLED. IT'S JUST AN AVERAGE, EVERYDAY ELASTIC ARM.
SUE, JOHNNY, THIS IS HOPPER HERTNECKY--AN OLD FRIEND OF BEN'S.
ELECTRONICS
NOW, HOPPER, SUPPOSE YOU REPEAT WHAT YOU TOLD ME OVER THE PHONE?
SURE THING ... IF YOU'LL TELL ME WHAT'S IN ALL THOSE CARTONS.
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT. I'VE BEEN MODIFYING MY GLOBAL BRAINWAVE SCANNER, TO PICK UP BEN'S CEREBRAL IMAGES.
YEAH? WELL, YOU CAN SAVE YER-SELF THE TROUBLE.
I CAN TELL YA WHERE BEN IS, NOT THAT IT'LL DO YOU THE LEAST BIT OF GOOD.
HE TOOK HIMSELF BACK TO MONSTER ISLAND, BUT AIN'T NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT. HE DOESN'T WANNA SEE ANY OF YOU-- NOT NOW, NOT EVER!

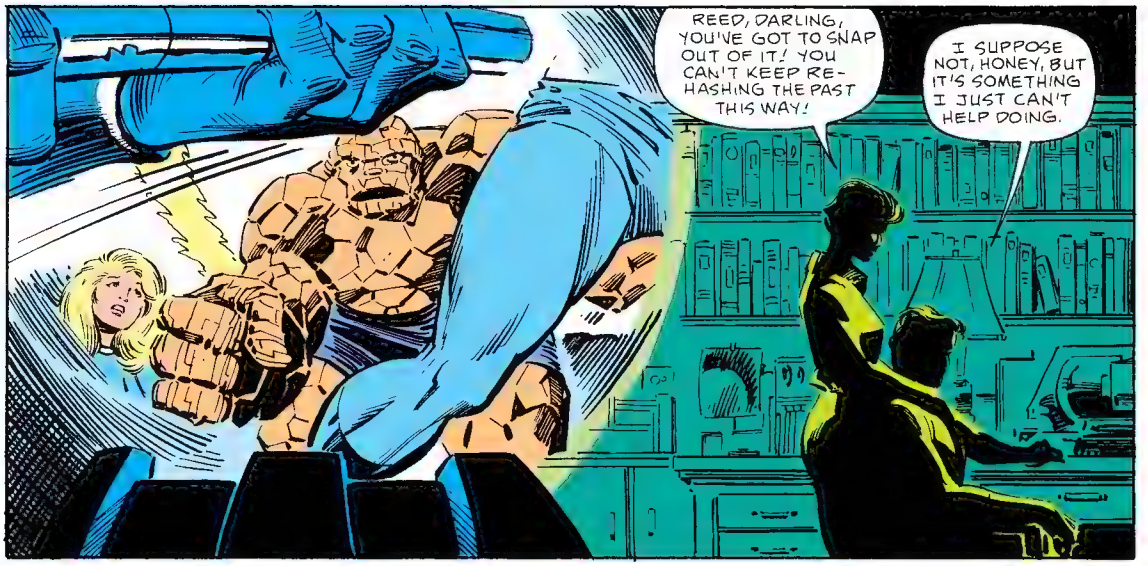

HE KNEW YOU WOULD FIGURE OUT A WAY TO FIND 'IM SOONER OR LATER, RICHARDS, SO HE TOLD ME TO TELL YOU TO LAY OFF.
HE SAID HE'S GONE BACK WHERE HE BELONGS--WITH THE OTHER MONSTERS!
FACE IT, MISTER. IT'S YOUR FAULT BEN'S THE WAY HE IS! YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH TO HIM! HE'S BEEN HURT ENOUGH!
THE THREE OF YOU, WITH ALL YOUR BIG TALK AND YOUR FANCY TRAPPINGS. LIFE'S BEEN PRETTY GOOD TO YOU, HASN'T IT?
YOU TWO, YOU'VE GOT EACH OTHER, AND A KID, AND THE TORCH HAS A GIRL FRIEND--WHO USED TO BE BEN'S!
BUT DIDJA EVER STOP 'N' THINK WHAT IT'S BEEN LIKE FOR BEN? WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE--A THING?
HE'S WHERE HE WANTS TO BE NOW, WHERE HE FIGURES HE BELONGS. SO LEAVE HIM ALONE.
DON'T HURT HIM ANY MORE.
HEY, WHAT DID OL' RIP VAN WINKLE WANT? DON'T TELL ME, LET ME GUESS. HE'S WORKING HIS WAY THROUGH COLLEGE SELLING SUBSCRIPTIONS, RIGHT?
LOOKS LIKE I'M WRONG.
OKAY, SO JOAN RIVERS I'M NOT! I'M STILL JUST THE PLAIN OLD SHE-HULK, BUT WHY THE LONG FACES?
SOMETHING'S WRONG, REALLY WRONG. I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM LIKE THIS!


SOME TIME LATER, IN NEW YORK...
SOMETHING'S BEEN GNAWING AT REED, SUE, AND JOHNNY EVER SINCE THAT OLD GEEZER CAME TO SEE THEM...
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'VE NOTICED IT, TOO.
BUT THEY WON'T LET US IN ON IT!
NO MATTER HOW CLOSE WE MAY GET TO THEM, OR HOW MUCH WE TRY TO BE A PART OF THE TEAM, THERE'S ALWAYS ONE PART OF THEIR LIVES THAT THEY KEEP PRIVATE-- ONE PART THAT NOBODY ELSE CAN EVER SHARE--EXCEPT FOR BEN, OF COURSE.
THEY'RE LIKE THE CLOSEST-KNIT FAMILY. YOU CAN BECOME THEIR VERY BEST FRIEND, BUT YOU STILL CAN'T INTRUDE UPON THE BLOOD BOND BETWEEN THEM.
AND Y'KNOW SOMETHING, WYATT? I LOVE THEM AND RESPECT THEM FOR IT.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW THEM WITHOUT LOVING THEM.
THAT'S WHY I HATE TO SEE THEM SO TORN UP INSIDE, WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO HELP!
I THINK THE BEST THING WE CAN DO IS STAY OUT OF THEIR WAY.

I'VE BEEN THINKING, JENNIFER. SPEAKING OF LOVING, LIFE ISN'T ALL AEROBICS AND LIFTING WEIGHTS.
WHY DO I GET THE FEELING YOU'RE TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING?
YOU KNOW WHAT I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU. YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT--
HEY! I THOUGHT HEAP BIG INJUN CHIEFS WERE MEN OF FEW WORDS.
JUST KEEP MASSAGING MY SHOULDERS THAT WAY, GERONIMO. THEY'RE ALL SKRUNCHY.
MEANWHILE...
I OUGHTA THANK THESE WOULD-BE DILLINGERS FOR GIVING ME A CHANCE TO GET BACK INTO ACTION AGAIN.
I WAS GOING STIR-CRAZY, SITTING AROUND AND MOPING ABOUT POOR BEN.
SHOOT 'IM, YA DUMMY, BEFORE WE GET ROASTED!
I CAN'T! HE FRIED MY BLASTER! IT'S TOO HOT TO HOLD!
EASE UP, TORCH! WE'LL TAKE OVER NOW.
MAN! FEELS LIKE WE'RE RUNNIN' INTO AN OVEN!
WATCH YOUR STEP, GUYS, TILL THE PAVEMENT COOLS DOWN!


THAT WAS TOO EASY!
MUNICIPAL AND TRUST CO.
LIKE SHOOTING DUCKS IN A GALLERY!
SO OKAY! SO I'M THE FAMOUS, FABULOUS, FLAMIN' HUMAN TORCH! BIG DEAL!
BEN GRIMM, THE BEST FRIEND A GUY EVER HAD, HATES ME--THINKS I'M NEXT THING TO A SLUG!
AND THE THING THAT WRINGS ME OUT IS-- I'VE GOT A HUNCH HE'S RIGHT!
WHEN I THINK HOW I'VE TREATED HIM--!
I'VE SHOWN HIM AS MUCH LOYALTY AS THAT CRUMMY, ROTTING, HALF-SUNKEN BARGE OVER THERE HAS!
ZSSSSPPT!
HOW WOULD I HAVE FELT IF MY BEST BUDDY STOLE AWAY THE GIRL I LOVED?
BEST BUDDY! THAT'S A LAUGH! I TREATED HIM WORSE--THAN ANY ENEMY!


LATER, AT THE F.F.'S NEW HEADQUARTERS...
NOW YOU BE A GOOD BOY, FRANKLIN, AND MAKE DADDY AND ME PROUD OF YOU.
WHEN WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN, MOMMY?
OH, BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, DEAR. 'BYE, BABY.
WELL, THAT'S ONE WORRY OFF MY MIND. FRANKLIN'S SAFE AND SOUND AT THE AVENGERS MANSION.
NOW I CAN CONCENTRATE ON REED!
IT TEARS ME UP TO SEE HIM SO DEPRESSED, BROODING ABOUT BEN FOR HOURS AT A TIME.
HE BLAMES HIMSELF FOR EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED.
HE HASN'T LEFT HIS LAB SINCE YESTERDAY!
I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM FROM TORTURING HIMSELF THIS WAY!
I'D BETTER GO IN AND MAKE SURE HE'S ALL RIGHT.
MY FORCE-FIELD CAN OPEN THE DOOR LIKE AN INVISIBLE PLASTIC CARD!
I KNEW IT! HE'S WATCHING HOLOGRAMS OF BEN!

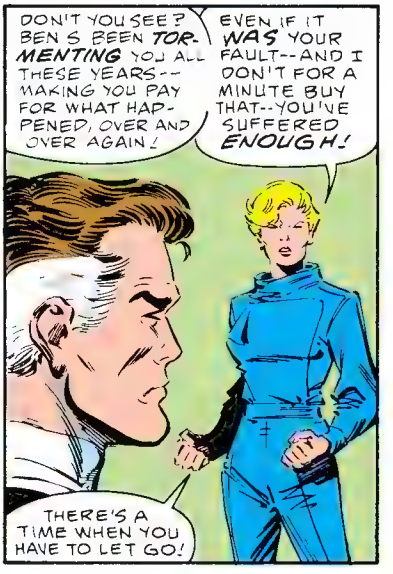

REED, DARLING, YOU'VE GOT TO SNAP OUT OF IT! YOU CAN'T KEEP RE-HASHING THE PAST THIS WAY!
I SUPPOSE NOT, HONEY, BUT IT'S SOMETHING I JUST CAN'T HELP DOING.

I'M SO HEARTSICK, SO ASHAMED. WITH ALL MY ALLEGED INTELLIGENCE, I DIDN'T REMEMBER THAT THIS WEEK IS THE ANNIVERSARY OF OUR BECOMING THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
WELL, THAT'S NOT SO TERRIBLE.

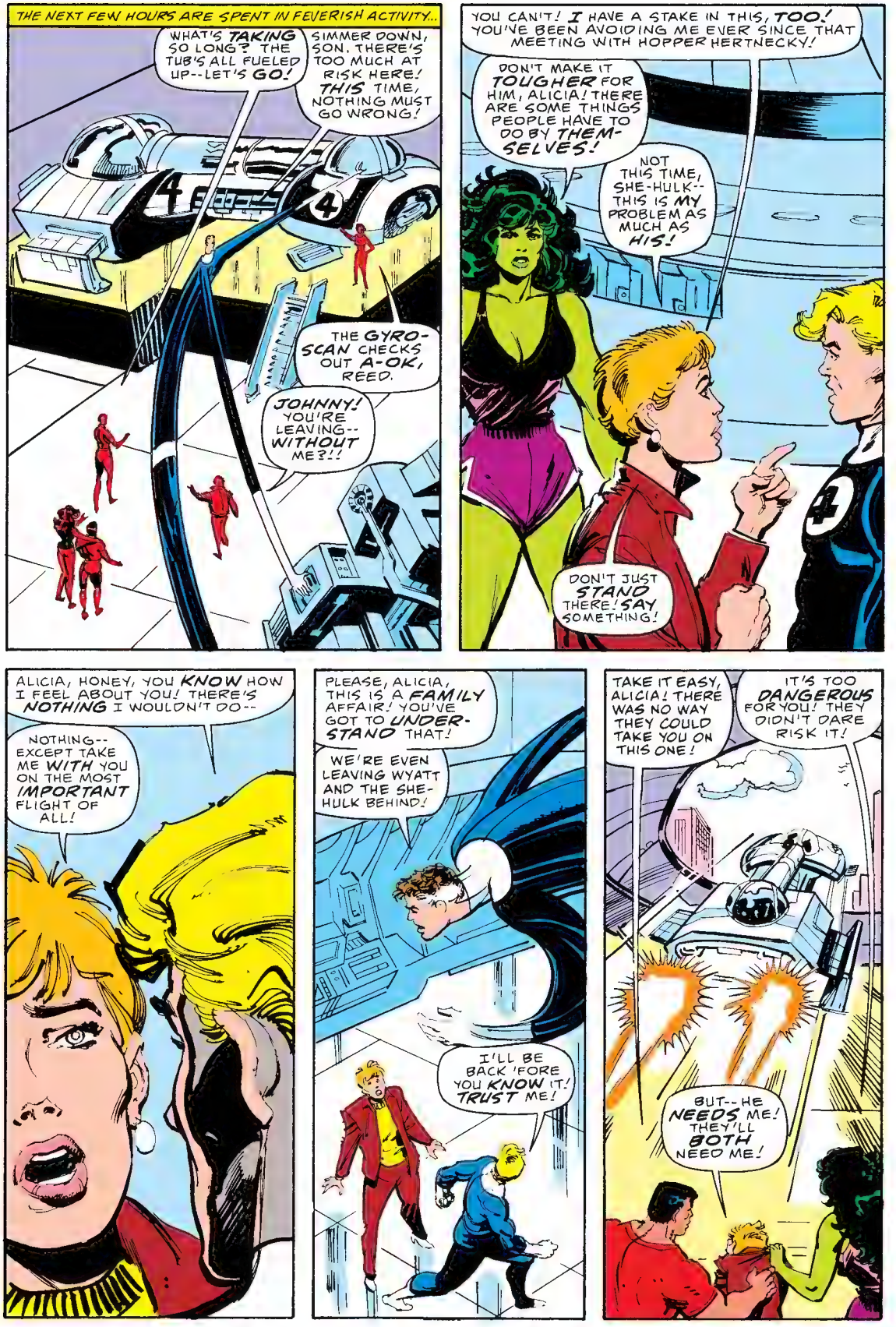
BUT IT IS! YOU SEE, BEN MUST HAVE REMEMBERED! THAT'S WHY HE WENT TO STOCKTON, WHERE THE ROCKET CRASHED!
WHERE THAT ACCURSED COSMIC ACCIDENT TURNED HIM INTO--
--THE THING!

IF I'D THOUGHT OF IT, I COULD HAVE GONE TO STOCKTON TO MEET HIM, TALK TO HIM, REASON WITH HIM, DO SOMETHING, ANYTHING TO BRING HIM TO HIS SENSES.
IT'S ALL MY FAULT--EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED! I'VE GOT TO LIVE WITH THAT--FOREVER!
ENOUGH!

NOW LISTEN TO ME, REED RICHARDS! I CAME TO TALK YOU INTO GOING TO MONSTER ISLE TO FIND BEN! BUT NOT NOW! SUDDENLY MY EYES ARE OPEN!


DON'T YOU SEE? BEN'S BEEN TORMENTING YOU ALL THESE YEARS--MAKING YOU PAY FOR WHAT HAPPENED, OVER AND OVER AGAIN!
EVEN IF IT WAS YOUR FAULT--AND I DON'T FOR A MINUTE BUY THAT--YOU'VE SUFFERED ENOUGH!
THERE'S A TIME WHEN YOU HAVE TO LET GO!

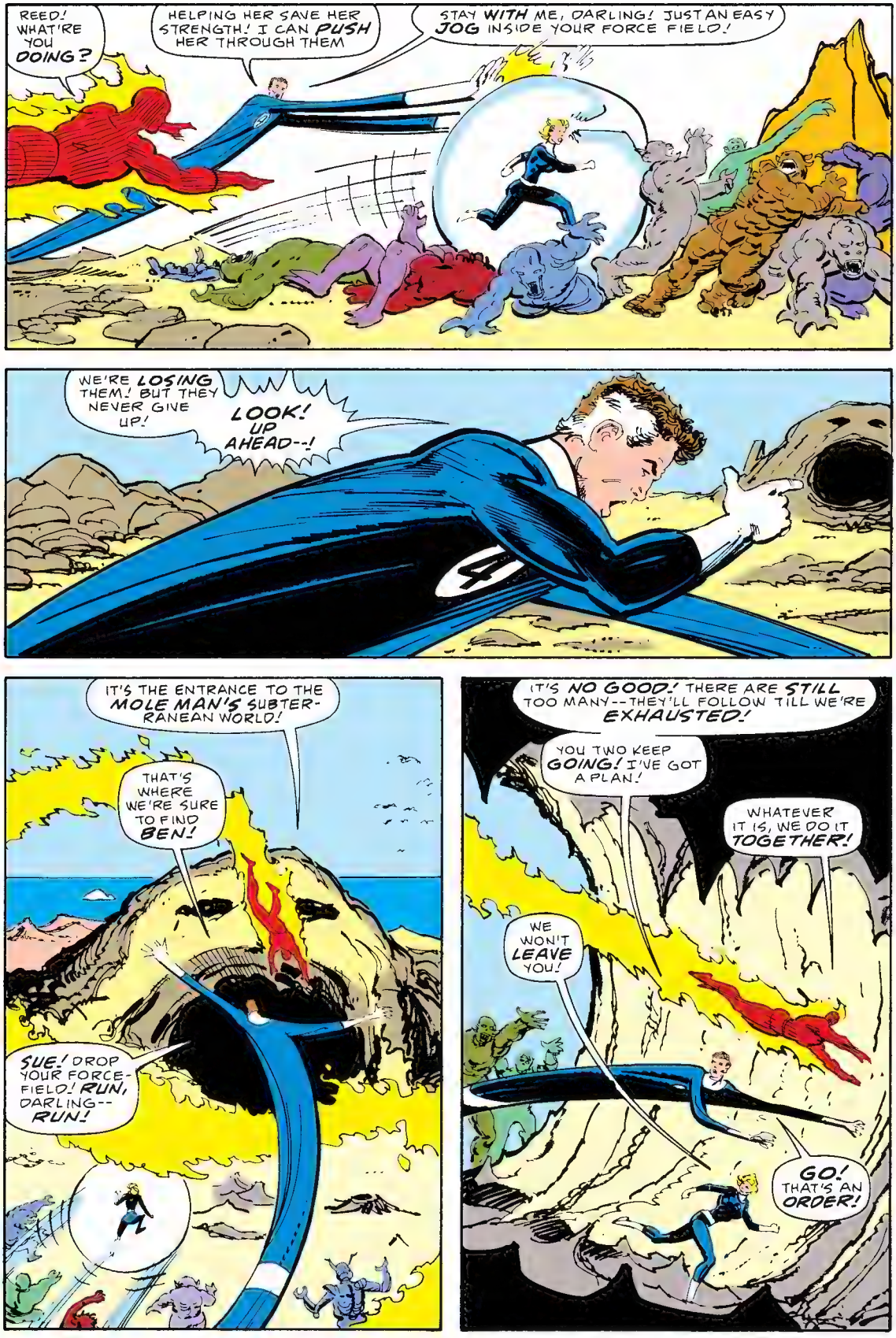
SURE, BEN'S SUFFERED! BUT SO HAVE YOU! EVERY TIME HE'D MOPE AND SULK, IT'D RIP YOU UP INSIDE--AND HE KNEW IT, TOO!
BUT NEVER ONCE DID HE EASE UP ON YOU! HE WANTED YOU TO PAY AND PAY--!
WHATEVER DEBT YOU OWED HIM, YOU'VE PAID A THOUSAND TIMES OVER. YOU CAN'T LET HIM KEEP PUNISHING YOU!
YOU CAN'T KEEP PUNISHING YOURSELF!
LET IT GO, DARLING. FORGET BEN. HE'S MADE HIS CHOICE. WE STILL HAVE OUR LIVES TO LIVE.
EVERY TIME HE'S RUN AWAY YOU'VE FOUND HIM AND BEGGED HIM TO COME HOME. THIS TIME, MAYBE WE'D ALL BE A LOT BETTER OFF IF WE NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.
NO.
YOU'VE OPENED MY EYES. THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO... REGARDLESS OF WHAT HOPPER HERTNECKY THINKS.
I'VE GOT TO SEE BEN ONE LAST TIME, AND SETTLE THINGS MAN TO MAN.
I'VE GOT TO GO TO MONSTER ISLE--ALONE--AND LET HIM KNOW THAT... THAT I'M THROUGH PAYING.
NOT WITHOUT ME YOU DON'T!
AND, DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT LEAVING ME BEHIND.
ALL RIGHT, WE'LL ALL GO!
AT LEAST THE THREE OF US ARE STILL A TEAM.


THE NEXT FEW HOURS ARE SPENT IN FEVERISH ACTIVITY...
WHAT'S TAKING SO LONG? THE TUB'S ALL FUELED UP--LET'S GO!
SIMMER DOWN, SON. THERE'S TOO MUCH AT RISK HERE! THIS TIME, NOTHING MUST GO WRONG!
THE GYRO-SCAN CHECKS OUT A-OK, REED.
JOHNNY! YOU'RE LEAVING--WITHOUT ME?!!
YOU CAN'T! I HAVE A STAKE IN THIS, TOO! YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING ME EVER SINCE THAT MEETING WITH HOPPER HERTNECKY!
DON'T MAKE IT TOUGHER FOR HIM, ALICIA! THERE ARE SOME THINGS PEOPLE HAVE TO DO BY THEM-SELVES!
NOT THIS TIME, SHE-HULK--THIS IS MY PROBLEM AS MUCH AS HIS!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE! SAY SOMETHING!
ALICIA, HONEY, YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU! THERE'S NOTHING I WOULDN'T DO--
NOTHING--EXCEPT TAKE ME WITH YOU ON THE MOST IMPORTANT FLIGHT OF ALL!
PLEASE, ALICIA, THIS IS A FAMILY AFFAIR! YOU'VE GOT TO UNDER-STAND THAT!
WE'RE EVEN LEAVING WYATT AND THE SHE-HULK BEHIND!
I'LL BE BACK 'FORE YOU KNOW IT! TRUST ME!
TAKE IT EASY, ALICIA! THERE WAS NO WAY THEY COULD TAKE YOU ON THIS ONE!
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS FOR YOU! THEY DIDN'T DARE RISK IT!
BUT--HE NEEDS ME! THEY'LL BOTH NEED ME!

NO ONE CAN KNOW THE TORTURED THOUGHTS THAT PLAGUE JOHNNY STORM FOR HOURS, UNTIL...
THERE IT IS! JUST AHEAD!
MONSTER ISLE!
I NEVER EXPECTED IT TO BE SO QUIET!
HOLD UP, REED! WAIT FOR US!
NO! STAY BACK! IT'S TOO QUIET! I DON'T LIKE IT!
A SPLIT SECOND LATER, THE UNCANNY SILENCE IS BROKEN BY...
THE MONSTERS!
PLAY IT SAFE-- PROTECT YOURSELVES!
THEY'RE EVERY-WHERE!
THEY KNEW WE WERE COMING!

TOO MANY OF THEM! SUE! JOHNNY! USE YOUR FORCE-FIELD --YOUR FLAME!
BUT EVEN AS THE BELEAGURED TRIO BATTLES DESPERATELY ON SHORE, A GARGANTUAN SEA CREATURE RISES FROM THE MURKY DEPTHS BEHIND THEM...
THE FANTASTICAR! HE'S RIGHT ABOVE IT!

HE DESTROYED IT! I COULDN'T REACH 'IM IN TIME!
FORGET IT! BLAST HIM BACK TO THE SEA! SUE'S IN TROUBLE!
I SEE HER! THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THEM--SHE CAN'T HOLD 'EM OFF MUCH LONGER!
HANG ON, SUSIE! HERE WE COME!
BATTLING LIKE DEMONS POSSESSED, REED AND JOHNNY HURL THEMSELVES AT THE MINDLESS MONSTROSITIES IN A CATACLYSMIC DISPLAY OF AWESOME POWER AND SENSES-SHATTERING RAGE!
MORE, SON-- MORE! SHE'S WEAKENING!


REED! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
HELPING HER SAVE HER STRENGTH! I CAN PUSH HER THROUGH THEM
STAY WITH ME, DARLING! JUST AN EASY JOG INSIDE YOUR FORCE FIELD!
WE'RE LOSING THEM! BUT THEY NEVER GIVE UP!
LOOK! UP AHEAD--!
IT'S THE ENTRANCE TO THE MOLE MAN'S SUBTERRANEAN WORLD!
THAT'S WHERE WE'RE SURE TO FIND BEN!
SUE! DROP YOUR FORCE-FIELD! RUN, DARLING-- RUN!
IT'S NO GOOD! THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY--THEY'LL FOLLOW TILL WE'RE EXHAUSTED!
YOU TWO KEEP GOING! I'VE GOT A PLAN!
WHATEVER IT IS, WE DO IT TOGETHER!
WE WON'T LEAVE YOU!
GO! THAT'S AN ORDER!

THEY THINK ALL THREE OF US ARE RUNNING FOR OUR LIVES!
THIS'LL BE THE ONE THING THEY DON'T EXPECT.
THEY'RE COMING! HAVE TO BRACE MYSELF!
UNNHH
HH
SPTIINNGG
WHAT HAPPENED BACK THERE?
I BOUGHT US SOME TIME!
QUICK, JOHNNY! NOW YOU CAN SEAL THE TUNNEL BEHIND US! THERE ARE OTHER TUNNELS--BUT THIS SHOULD STALL THEM FOR A LITTLE WHILE!
I HEAR YA TALKIN', SIS!
BUT IT'LL TAKE A LOT OF HEAT--MY FLAME'S GETTING WEAK!

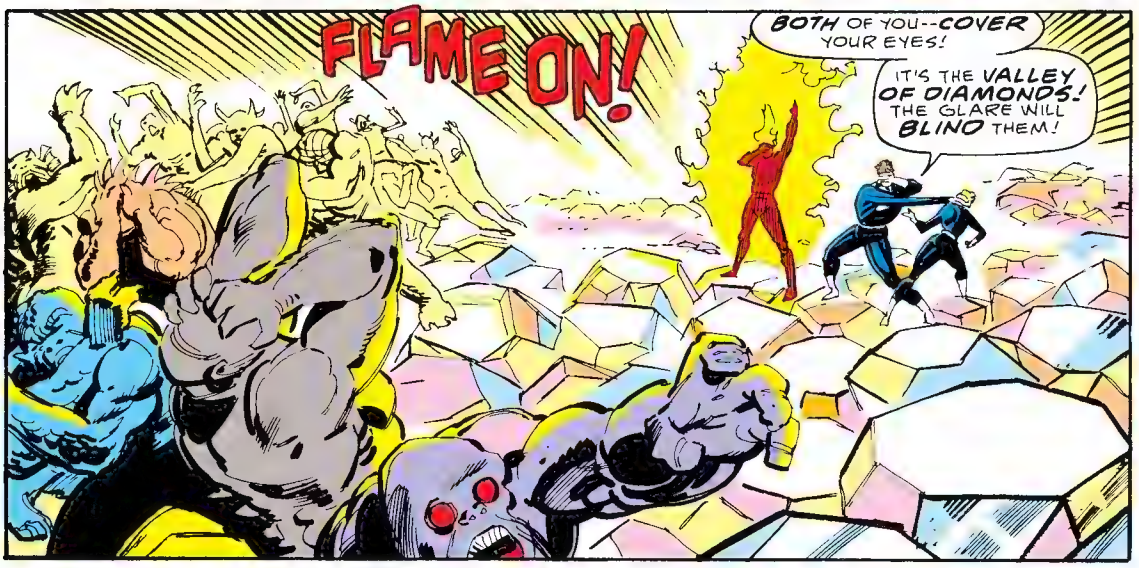
TA DAAAA! NO WAY THEY'LL GET THROUGH THAT IN TIME TO STOP US!
BUT I USED UP MOST OF MY FLAME! OL' TORCHY'S JUST A MATCH-STICK NOW!
GOOD WORK, JOHNNY! YOU'RE INCENDIARY ENOUGH TO LIGHT THE WAY FOR US!
QUICK! DIRECT YOUR LIGHT STRAIGHT AHEAD! I SEE SOME-THING THERE!
SPLENDID! WE'VE REACHED OUR GOAL! BEHIND THAT DOOR WE'LL FIND--
REED! LOOK OUT!
MORE OF THE MOLE MAN'S PLAY-MATES! WE'RE SURROUNDED!
NOT YET! THERE'S STILL ONE CHANCE!
YOUR FORCE FIELD, SUE--GIVE US TEN SECONDS-- THAT'S ALL WE'LL NEED!
YOU'VE GOT IT, DARLING!
HEY, LEGGO! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

THAT'S IT, SUE--JUST A FEW SECONDS MORE!
JOHNNY, DOUSE YOUR LIGHT! NOW!
BUT--HOW'LL WE SEE?
NO QUESTIONS! DO IT!
OKAY--PUSH!

WE'RE INSIDE! BUT IT'S PITCH DARK IN HERE!
THAT'S WHAT WE WANT! IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT'LL SAVE US!
HOW? THEY'RE MORE USED TO THE DARK THAN WE ARE!

PERFECT! KEEP RUNNING! JOHNNY, CAN YOU IGNITE AGAIN--JUST FOR A MINUTE?
THEY'RE COMING AFTER US--GETTING CLOSER! I CAN HEAR THEM!
I CAN SURE GIVE IT A TRY!

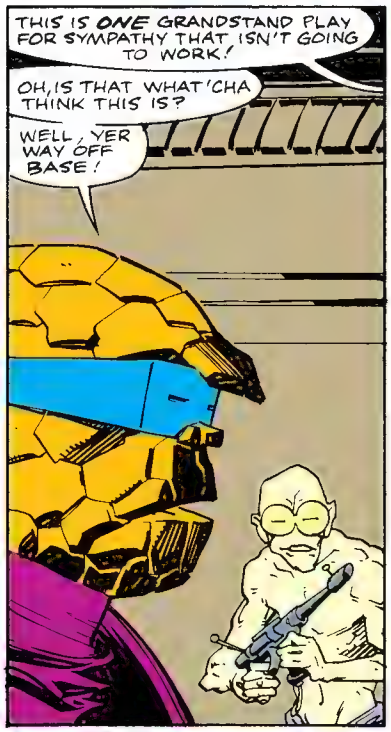
BUT, REED, HIS FLAME'S NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD THEM BACK!
RIGHT! BUT IT'LL DO FOR WHAT I WANT!
THEY'RE ALMOST ON TOP OF US!
NOW, JOHNNY--NOW!

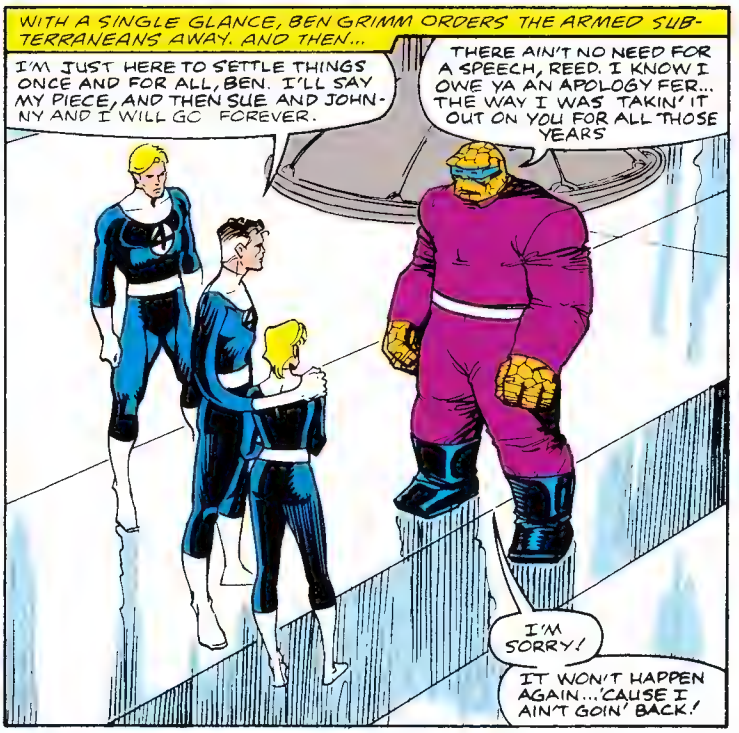

FLAME ON!
BOTH OF YOU--COVER YOUR EYES!
IT'S THE VALLEY OF DIAMONDS! THE GLARE WILL BLIND THEM!

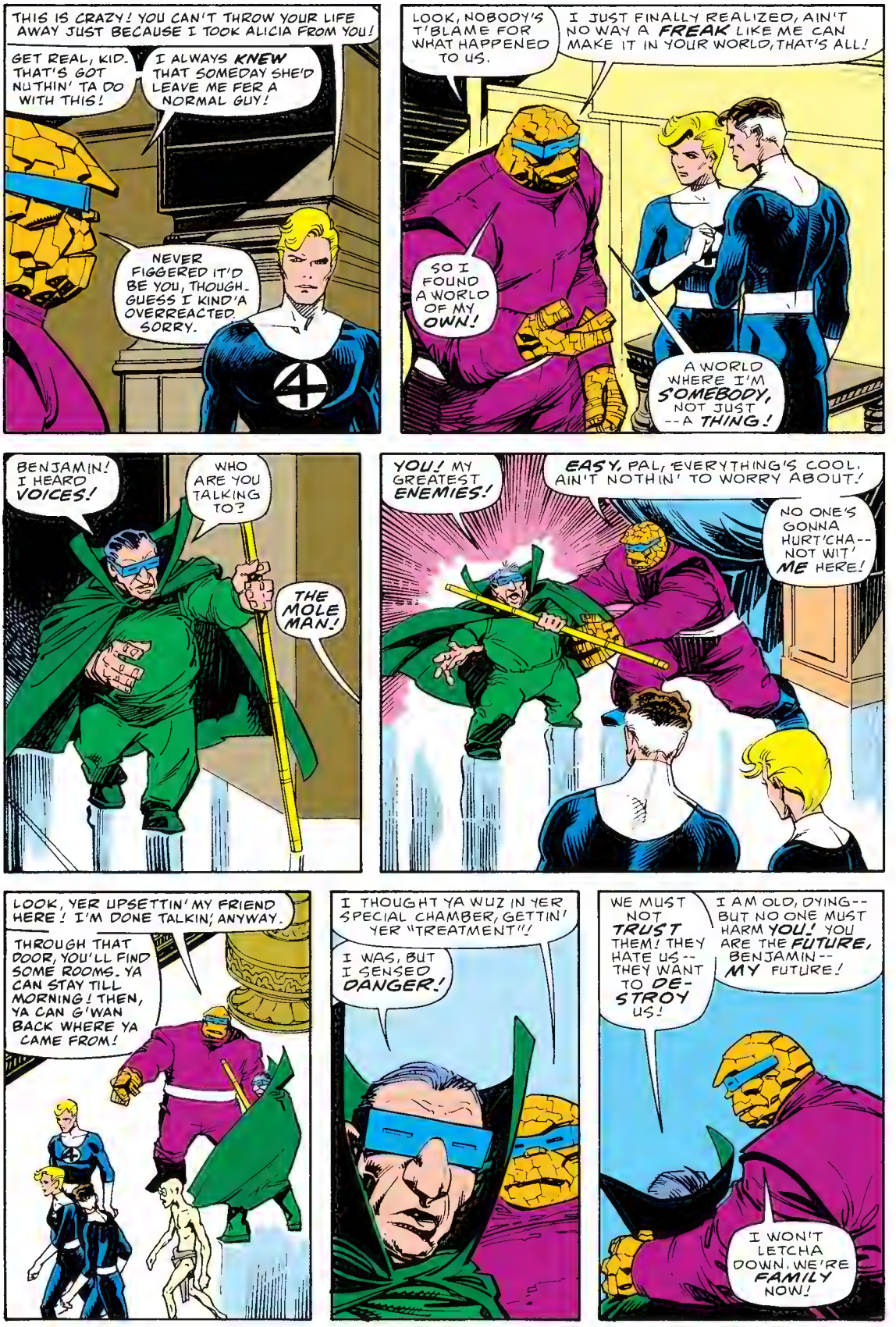
IT WORKED! NOW LET'S MOVE!
:GASP: HOW--DID WE EVER--BEAT THESE DOO-DAHS--BEFORE? :GASP: NOW--IT'S ALL WE CAN DO--JUST TO--STAY ALIVE!
YOU'VE--FORGOTTEN THE MOST IMPORTANT THING, JOHNNY. LAST TIME--WE HAD BEN --ON OUR SIDE!
WITH--THE FOUR OF US TO-GETHER--NOTHING WAS EVER IMPOS-SIBLE!
THEN, JUST WHEN THEIR ENERGY AND STRENGTH ARE AT THEIR LOWEST EBB...
HEADS UP IT ISN'T OVER!
MORE OF THEM! WHERE--DID THEY COME FROM?
I DUNNO--BUT IT SURE ISN'T THE WELCOME WAGON!
I'VE HAD IT WITH BEING PUSHED AROUND!
IF IT'S A FIGHT THEY WANT--
JOHNNY, NO! YOU'RE MUCH TOO WEAK!
I CAN STILL BURN ENOUGH TO--HEY! HE-HE'S SMOTHER-ING MY FLAME--
UNNNNHHHH

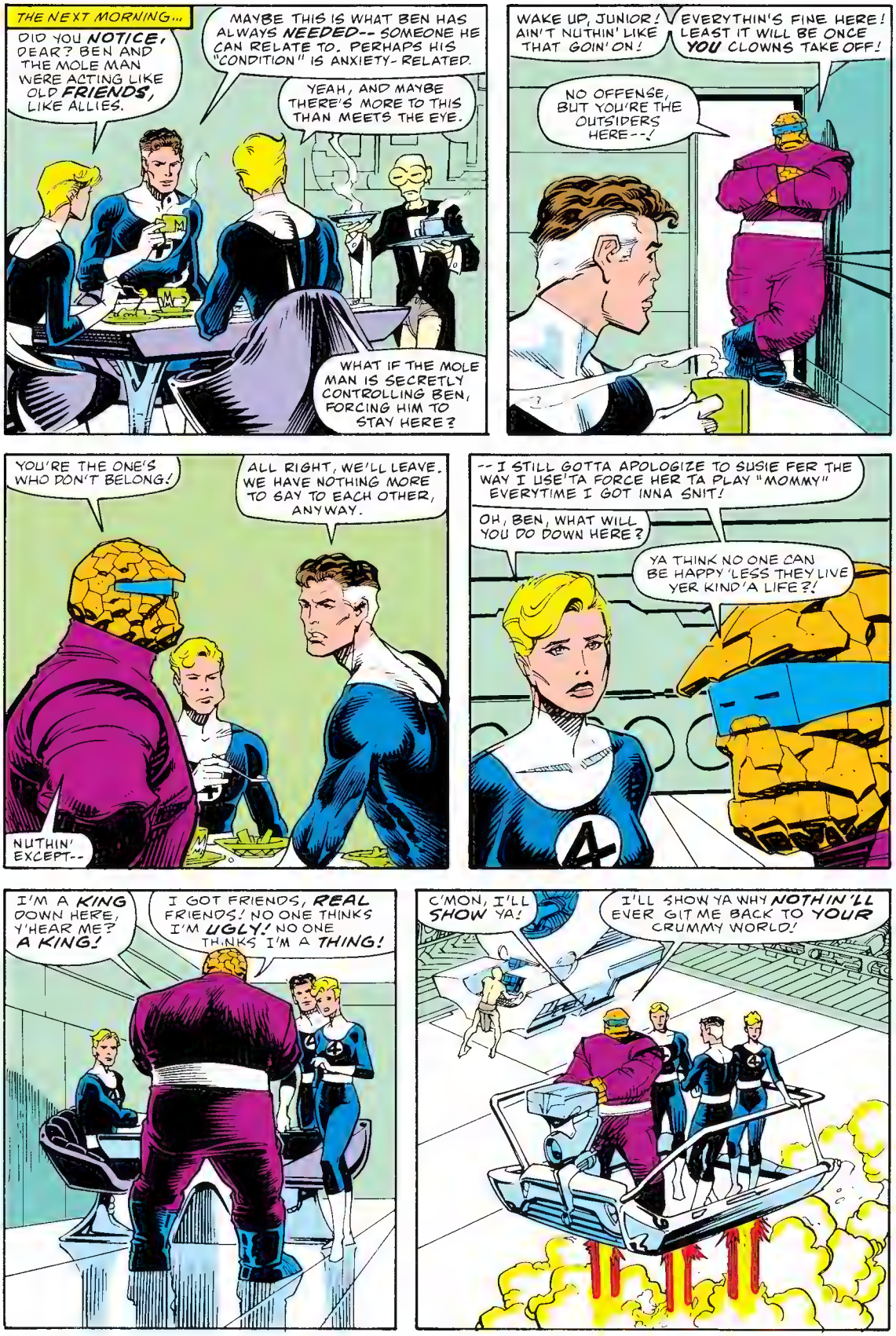
JOHNNY!
SUE! COME BACK! YOUR FORCE FIELD'S TOO WEAK!
WAIT! TURN INVISIBLE! IT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE!
BEHIND YOU --LOOK OUT!
SHE DOESN'T HEAR ME!
JOHNNY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
SUE! EVEN THOUGH HE CAN'T SEE YOU, HIS BAT-LIKE RADAR CAN SENSE--
OH NO!
WITH AN ANGUISHED CRY, REED RICHARDS HURLS HIMSELF AT THE GIGANTIC, NIGHTMARISH CREATURE...
AND AFTER A TREMENDOUS STRUGGLE, HE DOWNS THE MINDLESS MONSTROSITY, BUT THEN...
ANOTHER ONE! BEHIND ME! I-I'M BLACKING OUT--
NOT NOW! I --CAN'T FAIL NOW!
THROK!
BUT MERE FLESH AND BLOOD CAN ENDURE JUST SO MUCH...
IS IT MINUTES LATER, OR HOURS? THEY CANNOT TELL. IT DOES NOT MATTER...
RISE 'N' SHINE! THIS AIN'T NO FLOP JOINT!

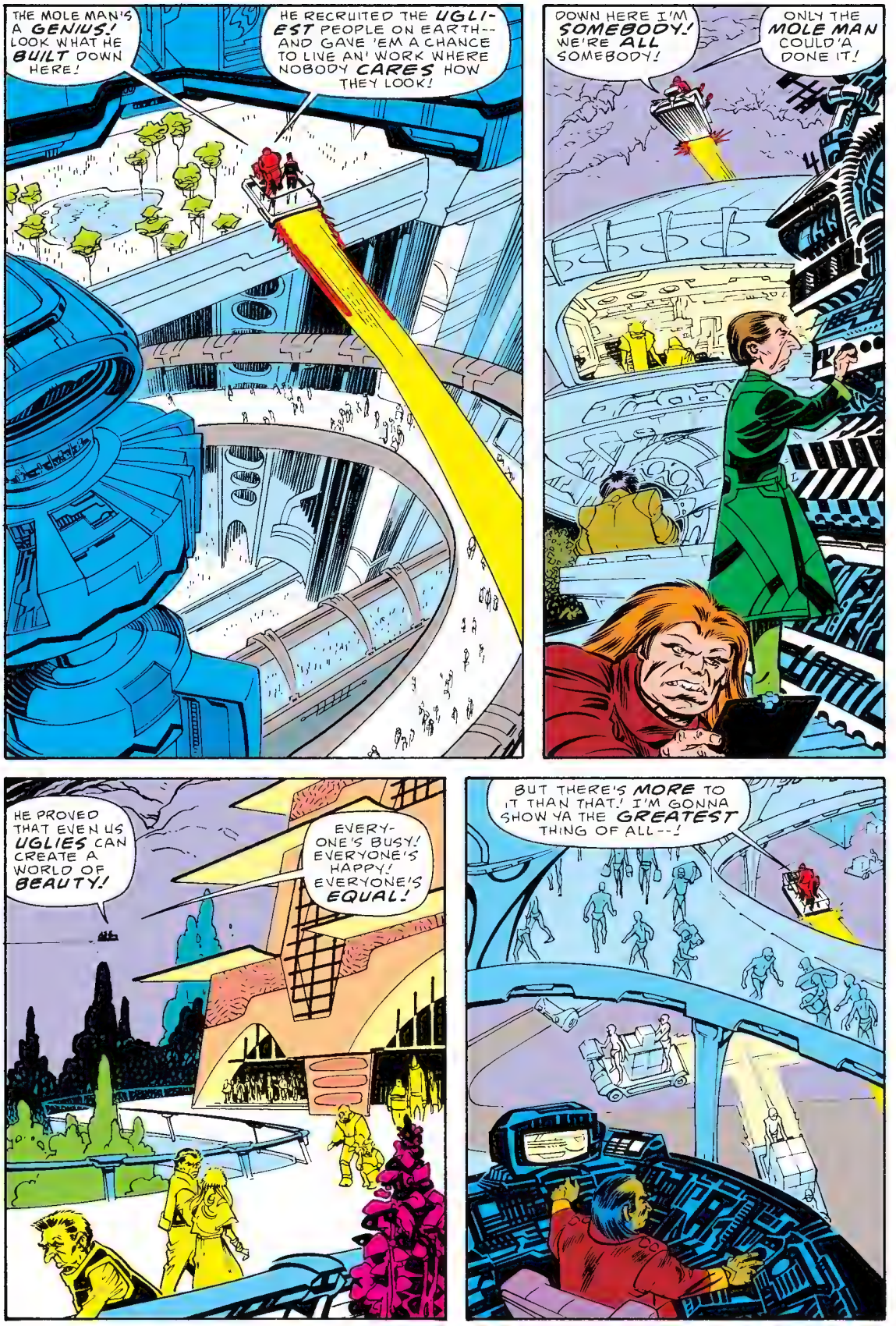
BEN!
WHY ARE YOU WEARING THAT OUTFIT... THE SAME AS THE MOLE MAN WEARS?
HIM 'N' ME'S BUDDIES, NOW! THIS IS MY HOME! WHAT HE DOES, I DO!
WHAT'RE YOU DOIN' HERE?
I SENT WORD WITH HERTNECKY THAT I DIDN'T WANNA SEE YA NO MORE!
I'M NOT HERE TO BEG YOU TO COME BACK WITH US, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK!

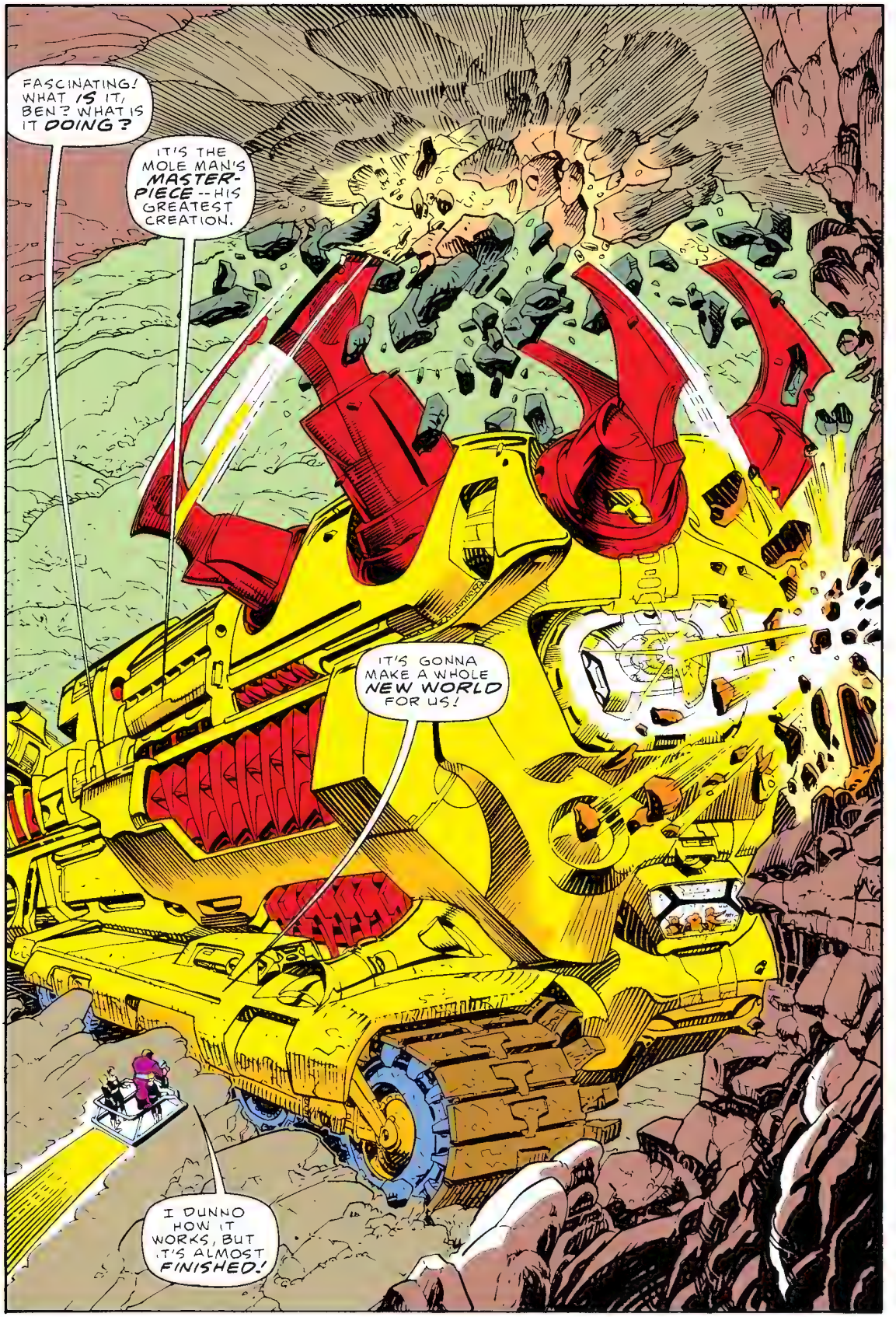

THIS IS ONE GRANDSTAND PLAY FOR SYMPATHY THAT ISN'T GOING TO WORK!
OH, IS THAT WHAT 'CHA THINK THIS IS?
WELL, YER WAY OFF BASE!


WITH A SINGLE GLANCE, BEN GRIMM ORDERS THE ARMED SUB-TERRANEANS AWAY. AND THEN...
I'M JUST HERE TO SETTLE THINGS ONCE AND FOR ALL, BEN. I'LL SAY MY PIECE, AND THEN SUE AND JOHNNY AND I WILL GO FOREVER.
THERE AIN'T NO NEED FOR A SPEECH, REED. I KNOW I OWE YA AN APOLOGY FER... THE WAY I WAS TAKIN' IT OUT ON YOU FOR ALL THOSE YEARS
I'M SORRY!
IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN... 'CAUSE I AIN'T GOIN' BACK!


THIS IS CRAZY! YOU CAN'T THROW YOUR LIFE AWAY JUST BECAUSE I TOOK ALICIA FROM YOU!
GET REAL, KID. THAT'S GOT NUTHIN' TA DO WITH THIS!
I ALWAYS KNEW THAT SOMEDAY SHE'D LEAVE ME FER A NORMAL GUY!
NEVER FIGGERED IT'D BE YOU, THOUGH. GUESS I KIND'A OVERREACTED. SORRY.
LOOK, NOBODY'S T'BLAME FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO US.
I JUST FINALLY REALIZED, AIN'T NO WAY A FREAK LIKE ME CAN MAKE IT IN YOUR WORLD, THAT'S ALL!
SO I FOUND A WORLD OF MY OWN!
A WORLD WHERE I'M SOMEBODY, NOT JUST --A THING!
BENJAMIN! I HEARD VOICES!
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
THE MOLE MAN!
YOU! MY GREATEST ENEMIES!
EASY, PAL, EVERYTHING'S COOL. AIN'T NOTHIN' TO WORRY ABOUT!
NO ONE'S GONNA HURT'CHA-- NOT WIT' ME HERE!
LOOK, YER UPSETTIN' MY FRIEND HERE! I'M DONE TALKIN', ANYWAY.
THROUGH THAT DOOR, YOU'LL FIND SOME ROOMS. YA CAN STAY TILL MORNING! THEN, YA CAN G'WAN BACK WHERE YA CAME FROM!
I THOUGHT YA WUZ IN YER SPECIAL CHAMBER, GETTIN' YER "TREATMENT"!
I WAS, BUT I SENSED DANGER!
WE MUST NOT TRUST THEM! THEY HATE US-- THEY WANT TO DE-STROY US!
I AM OLD, DYING-- BUT NO ONE MUST HARM YOU! YOU ARE THE FUTURE, BENJAMIN-- MY FUTURE!
I WON'T LETCHA DOWN. WE'RE FAMILY NOW!


THE NEXT MORNING...
DID YOU NOTICE, DEAR? BEN AND THE MOLE MAN WERE ACTING LIKE OLD FRIENDS, LIKE ALLIES.
MAYBE THIS IS WHAT BEN HAS ALWAYS NEEDED-- SOMEONE HE CAN RELATE TO. PERHAPS HIS "CONDITION" IS ANXIETY-RELATED.
YEAH, AND MAYBE THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN MEETS THE EYE.
WHAT IF THE MOLE MAN IS SECRETLY CONTROLLING BEN, FORCING HIM TO STAY HERE?
WAKE UP, JUNIOR! AIN'T NUTHIN' LIKE THAT GOIN' ON!
EVERYTHIN'S FINE HERE! LEAST IT WILL BE ONCE YOU CLOWNS TAKE OFF!
NO OFFENSE, BUT YOU'RE THE OUTSIDERS HERE--!
YOU'RE THE ONE'S WHO DON'T BELONG!
ALL RIGHT, WE'LL LEAVE. WE HAVE NOTHING MORE TO SAY TO EACH OTHER, ANYWAY.
NUTHIN' EXCEPT--
--I STILL GOTTA APOLOGIZE TO SUSIE FER THE WAY I USE'TA FORCE HER TA PLAY "MOMMY" EVERYTIME I GOT INNA SNIT!
OH, BEN, WHAT WILL YOU DO DOWN HERE?
YA THINK NO ONE CAN BE HAPPY 'LESS THEY LIVE YER KIND'A LIFE?!
I'M A KING DOWN HERE, Y'HEAR ME? A KING!
I GOT FRIENDS, REAL FRIENDS! NO ONE THINKS I'M UGLY! NO ONE THINKS I'M A THING!
C'MON, I'LL SHOW YA!
I'LL SHOW YA WHY NOTHIN'LL EVER GIT ME BACK TO YOUR CRUMMY WORLD!

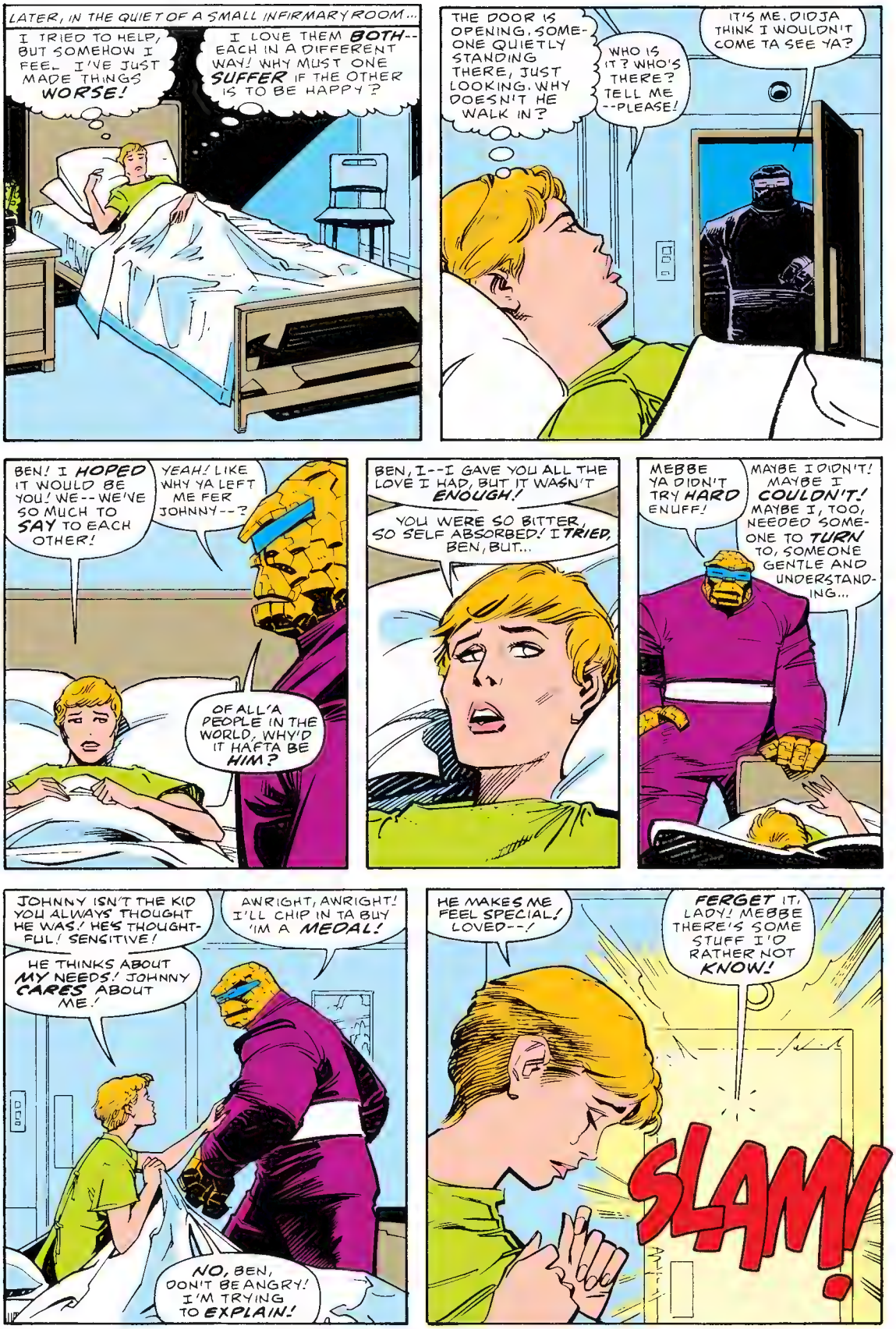

THE MOLE MAN'S A GENIUS! LOOK WHAT HE BUILT DOWN HERE!
HE RECRUITED THE UGLIEST PEOPLE ON EARTH-- AND GAVE 'EM A CHANCE TO LIVE AN' WORK WHERE NOBODY CARES HOW THEY LOOK!
DOWN HERE I'M SOMEBODY! WE'RE ALL SOMEBODY!
ONLY THE MOLE MAN COULD'A DONE IT!
HE PROVED THAT EVEN US UGLIES CAN CREATE A WORLD OF BEAUTY!
EVERY-ONE'S BUSY! EVERYONE'S HAPPY! EVERYONE'S EQUAL!
BUT THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT! I'M GONNA SHOW YA THE GREATEST THING OF ALL--!


FASCINATING! WHAT IS IT, BEN? WHAT IS IT DOING?
IT'S THE MOLE MAN'S MASTER-PIECE--HIS GREATEST CREATION.
IT'S GONNA MAKE A WHOLE NEW WORLD FOR US!
I DUNNO HOW IT WORKS, BUT IT'S ALMOST FINISHED!

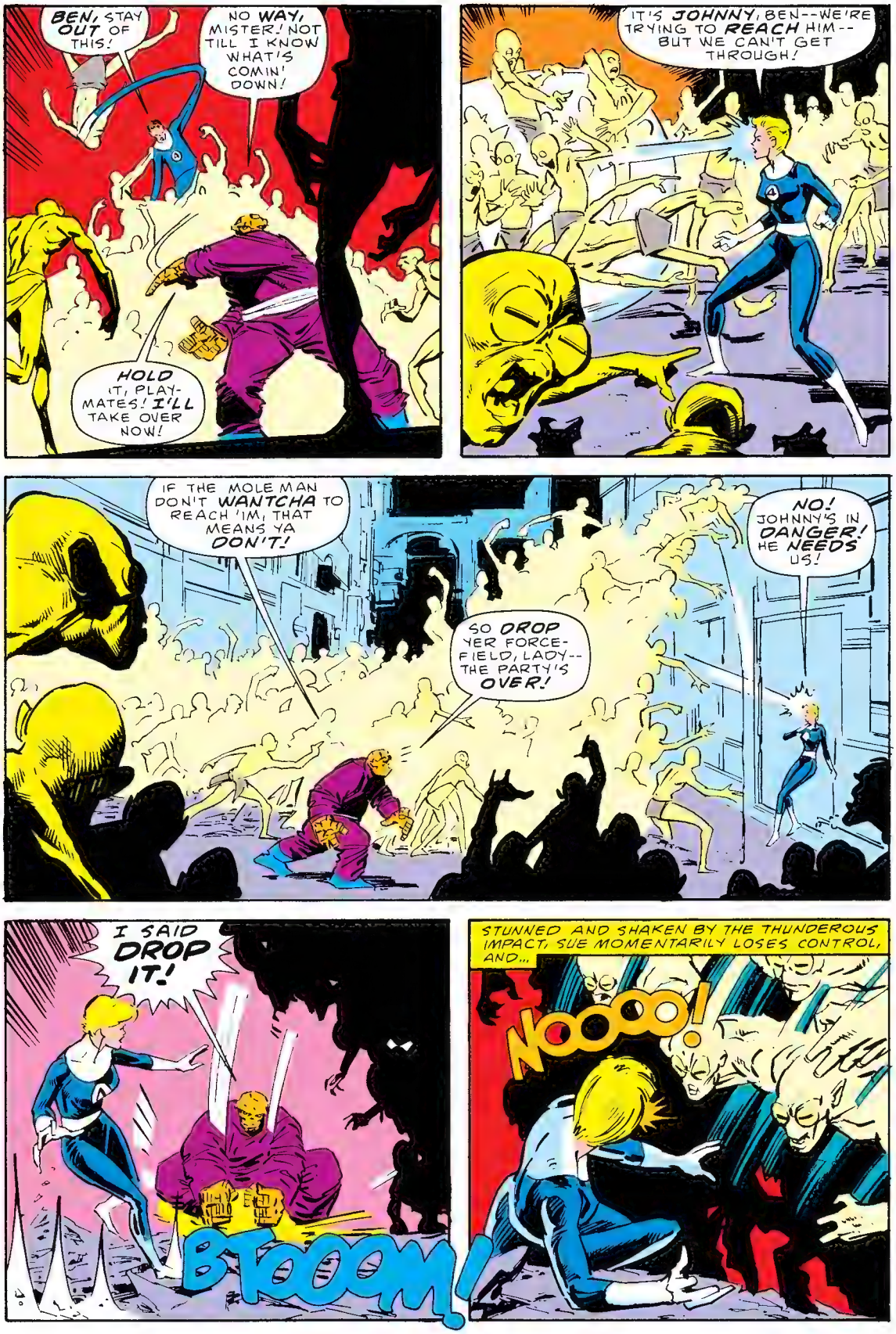
BEN, THE POWER IT MUST GENERATE IS INCONCEIVABLE! IF IT'S A WEAPON--!
WEAPONS! THAT'S ALL YA EVER THINK ABOUT! IT'S SOME KIND'A EARTH SHIFTER! IT'S GONNA CREATE A NEW CONTI-NENT FOR US!
IT'LL BE OUR OWN COUNTRY--SMACK IN THE MIDDLE O'THE PACIFIC--AS BIG AS NEW ZEALAND!
US UGLIES WON'T HAVETA LIVE UNDERGROUND NO MORE! WE'LL BE LIKE ANYONE ELSE--IN OUR OWN LAND!
THE LAND THAT THE MACHINE YA JUST SAW IS GONNA RAISE IT UP FOR US RIGHT OUTTA THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA!
BUT BEN...
WAIT! I AIN'T FINISHED YET!
WE'LL HAVE OUR OWN ARMY, T'MAKE SURE NO ONE EVER MESSES WITH US!
AN' YA KNOW WHAT? I'M GONNA BE THE GENERAL!
BEN, LISTEN TO ME! YOU'RE NO SCIENTIST! HOW CAN YOU BE SURE WHAT THE PURPOSE OF THAT MACHINE IS?
'CAUSE THE MOLE MAN TOLD ME, THAT'S HOW!
NOBODY BETTER CALL HIM A LIAR WHILE I'M AROUND!
REED, WHAT'S WRONG? THAT EXPRESSION ON YOUR FACE--!
I'LL-- TELL YOU LATER, DEAR!
BENJAMIN! RETURN AT ONCE!
YOUR TOUR OF OUR COMPLEX WAS UN-AUTHORIZED!
UH-OH! LOOKS LIKE I GOOFED!

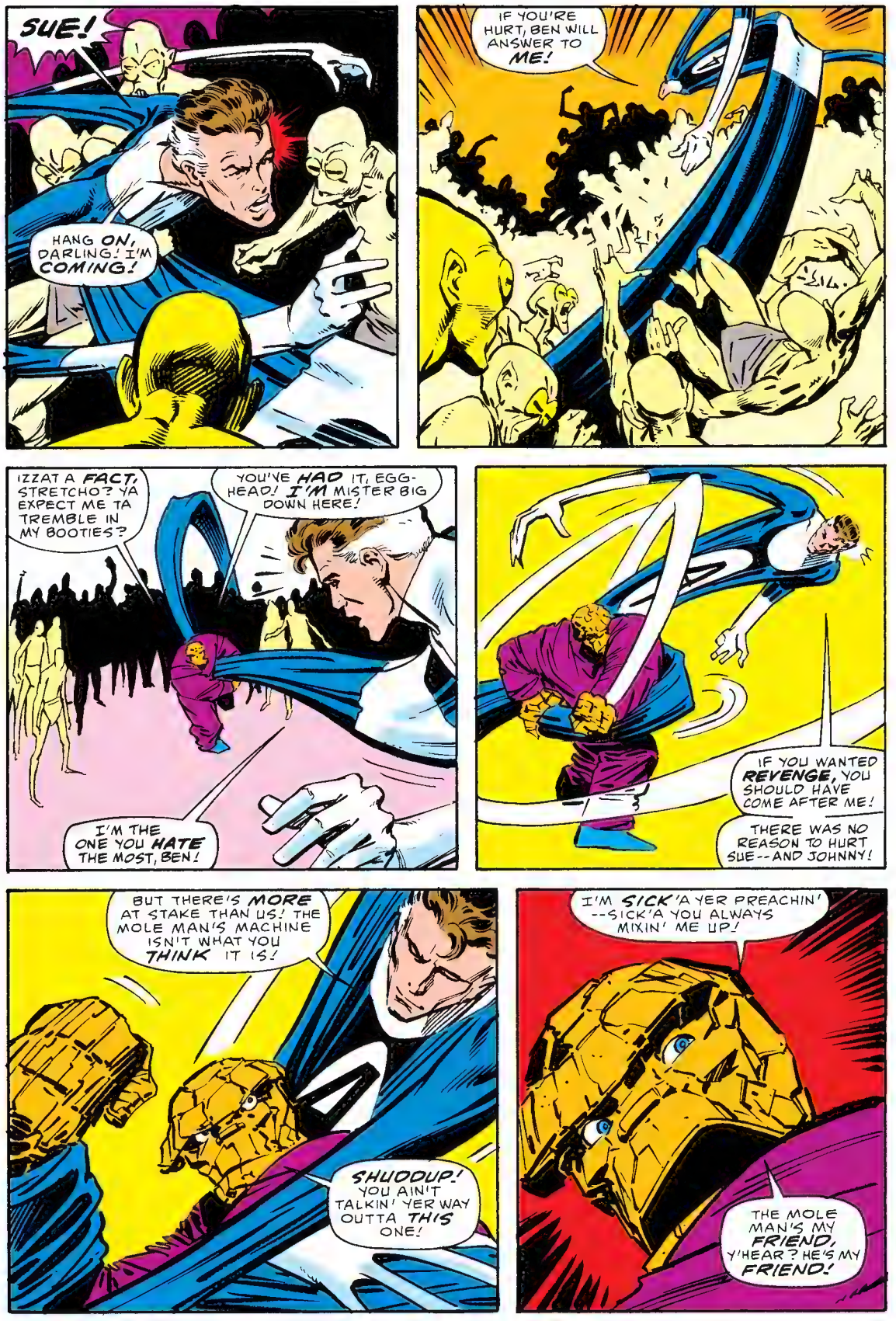
HOW COULD YOU REVEAL OUR GREATEST PROJECT TO MY MOST HATED ENEMIES?!!
HEY, IT'S AWRIGHT--NO HARM DONE! I WUZ JUS' TRYIN' T'PROVE A POINT!
ANYWAY, WHUT CAN THEY DO?
THEY'RE LEAVIN' NOW--AND IT'LL BE FER GOOD!
YOU GOT NOTHIN T'WORRY ABOUT WIT' ME AROUND!
I KNOW I CAN TRUST YOU, BENJAMIN!
BUT THOSE THREE ARE SO SLY, SO TREACHEROUS!
NOTHING MUST STOP MY MASTER PLAN NOW!
FORGIVE THE INTRUSION! BUT WE'VE CAUGHT A SPY!
I KNEW IT! IT'S THE WORK OF RICHARDS --AND THE OTHER TWO!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE! BRING HIM IN!
IT'S NOT A HIM!
ALICIA!
WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH HER?
LEAVE HER! SHE SEEMS HARMLESS!
IF SHE'S BEEN HARMED --!

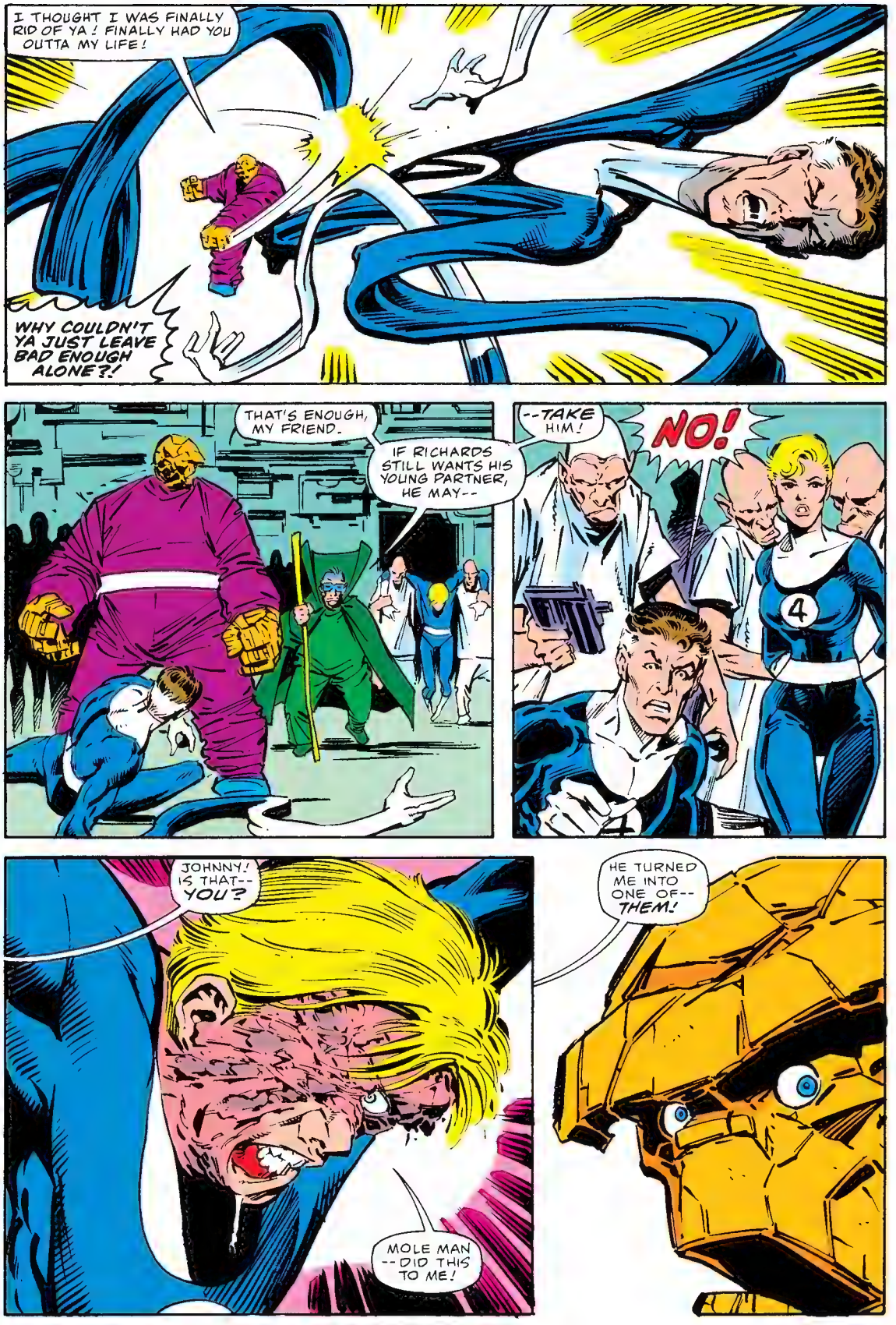
SHE'S IN SHOCK! BUT NOTHING SEEMS TO BE BROKEN!
WHAT HAPPENED, HONEY? HOW'D YOU GET HERE?
HOPPER HERTNECKY! I BEGGED HIM--TO BRING ME! HE--HE'S WAITING--ABOVE!
WHEN I LEFT HIM, THE MONSTERS --GRABBED ME! THEY TOOK ME UNDERGROUND, BUT--I BROKE FREE--AND RAN, AND RAN--!!
I HAD TO COME! I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT JOHNNY--I WAS SO AFRAID--
SO AFRAID OF BEN--WHAT HE MIGHT DO TO HIM!
IT NEVER CHANGES, DOES IT? SHE SPEAKS OF YOU AS IF YOU'RE A MONSTER!
LEMME ALONE! DON'T SAY ANYMORE! JUST LEMME ALONE!
SHE NEEDS REST! SHE MUST STAY HERE! SHE CANNOT BE MOVED!
DO YOU THINK WE ARE SAVAGES? I'LL HAVE HER TAKEN TO OUR INFIRMARY!
THE REST OF YOU ARE CONFINED TO QUARTERS!
YOU WILL REMAIN THERE TILL IT IS TIME FOR YOUR DEPARTURE!
NO ONE COULD SEE THE NAKED HATRED IN THE MOLE MAN'S EYES AS HE STARED AT JOHNNY STORM--
BENJAMIN IS THE ONLY FRIEND I'VE EVER HAD!
AND YOU ARE TO BLAME FOR HIS ANGUISH!


LATER, IN THE QUIET OF A SMALL INFIRMARY ROOM...
I TRIED TO HELP, BUT SOMEHOW I FEEL I'VE JUST MADE THINGS WORSE!
I LOVE THEM BOTH--EACH IN A DIFFERENT WAY! WHY MUST ONE SUFFER IF THE OTHER IS TO BE HAPPY?
THE DOOR IS OPENING. SOMEONE QUIETLY STANDING THERE, JUST LOOKING. WHY DOESN'T HE WALK IN?
WHO IS IT? WHO'S THERE? TELL ME --PLEASE!
IT'S ME. DIDJA THINK I WOULDN'T COME TA SEE YA?
BEN! I HOPED IT WOULD BE YOU! WE-- WE'VE SO MUCH TO SAY TO EACH OTHER!
YEAH! LIKE WHY YA LEFT ME FER JOHNNY--?
OF ALL'A PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, WHY'D IT HAFTA BE HIM?
BEN, I--I GAVE YOU ALL THE LOVE I HAD, BUT IT WASN'T ENOUGH!
YOU WERE SO BITTER, SO SELF ABSORBED! I TRIED, BEN, BUT...
MEBBE YA DIDN'T TRY HARD ENUFF!
MAYBE I DIDN'T! MAYBE I COULDN'T! MAYBE I, TOO, NEEDED SOMEONE TO TURN TO, SOMEONE GENTLE AND UNDERSTANDING...
JOHNNY ISN'T THE KID YOU ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS! HE'S THOUGHTFUL! SENSITIVE!
AWRIGHT, AWRIGHT! I'LL CHIP IN TA BUY 'IM A MEDAL!
HE THINKS ABOUT MY NEEDS! JOHNNY CARES ABOUT ME!
NO, BEN, DON'T BE ANGRY! I'M TRYING TO EXPLAIN!
HE MAKES ME FEEL SPECIAL! LOVED--!
FERGET IT, LADY! MEBBE THERE'S SOME STUFF I'D RATHER NOT KNOW!
SLAM!

I OUGHTTA HAVE MY FOOL HEAD EXAMINED!
SHOULDA KNOWED BETTER THAN TO GO SEE HER!
IF I JUST WANNA HURT MYSELF, I CAN ALWAYS HIT MY HEAD AGAINST THE WALL!
SOMEHOW THAT PAIN'S EASIER TA TAKE!
WHY'D SHE HAVETA COME HERE, ANYWAY? I WUZ JUST BEGINNIN' TO FERGET--
AWW, WHO AM I KIDDIN'! I CAN'T--HEY! WHAT'S THAT?
SOUNDS LIKE A BLASTED WAR GOIN' ON!
NOBODY BETTER BE HAVIN' A CLOBBERIN' TIME WITHOUT BASHFUL BENJAMIN!
I'M MAD ENUFF RIGHT NOW TA WIPE OUT A REGIMENT!
IT'S LIKE A YANCY STREET HOE DOWN --AN' IT DON'T TAKE A GENIUS TA GUESS WHO STARTED IT!
WELL, WADDAYA KNOW! IF IT AIN'T STRETCHO 'N' SUE, ACTIN' LIKE THEY OWN THE JOINT!

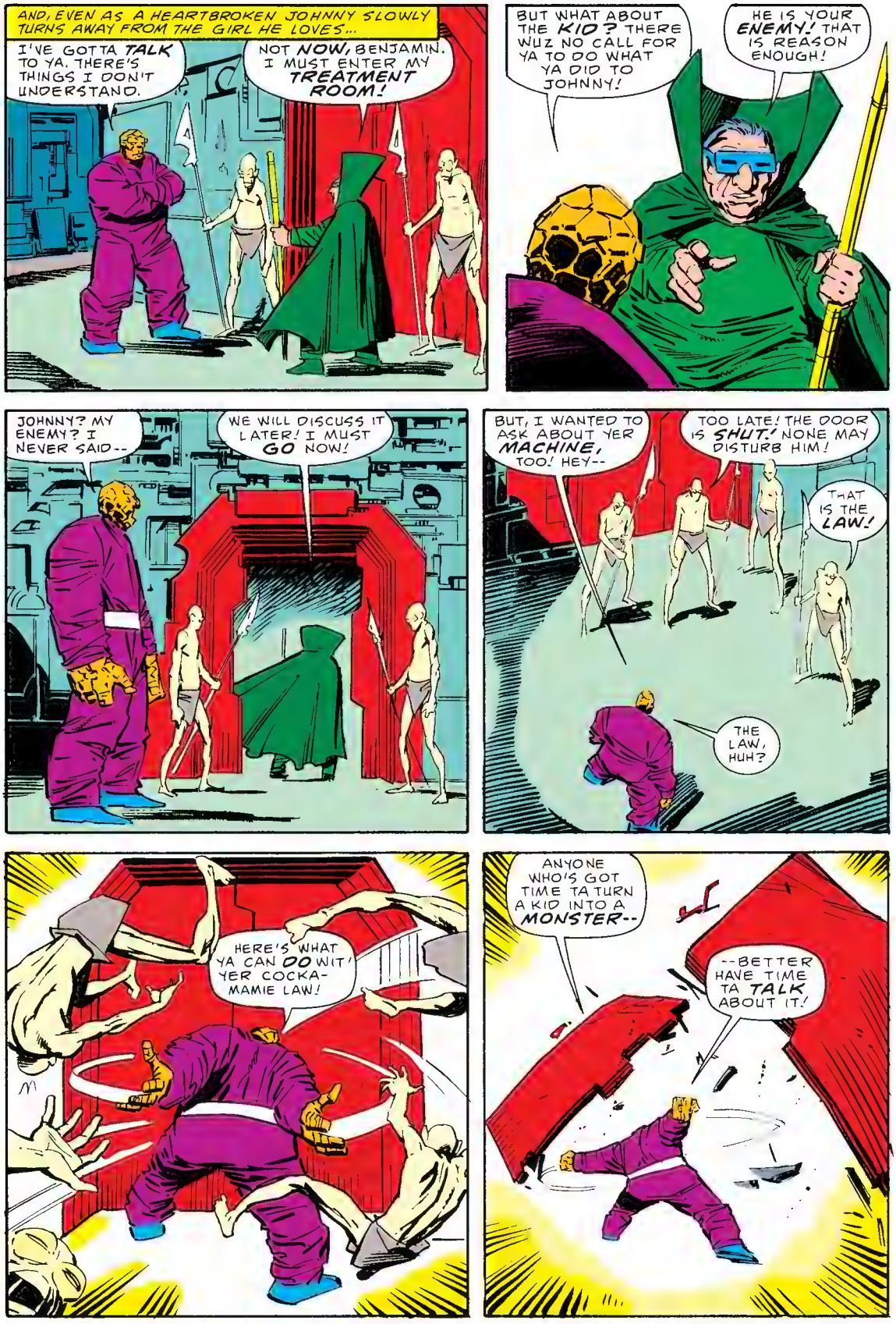

BEN, STAY OUT OF THIS!
NO WAY, MISTER! NOT TILL I KNOW WHAT'S COMIN' DOWN!
HOLD IT, PLAY-MATES! I'LL TAKE OVER NOW!
IT'S JOHNNY, BEN--WE'RE TRYING TO REACH HIM--BUT WE CAN'T GET THROUGH!
IF THE MOLE MAN DON'T WANTCHA TO REACH 'IM, THAT MEANS YA DON'T!
SO DROP YER FORCE-FIELD, LADY--THE PARTY'S OVER!
NO! JOHNNY'S IN DANGER! HE NEEDS US!
I SAID DROP IT!
BTOOOM!
STUNNED AND SHAKEN BY THE THUNDEROUS IMPACT, SUE MOMENTARILY LOSES CONTROL, AND...
NOOOO!

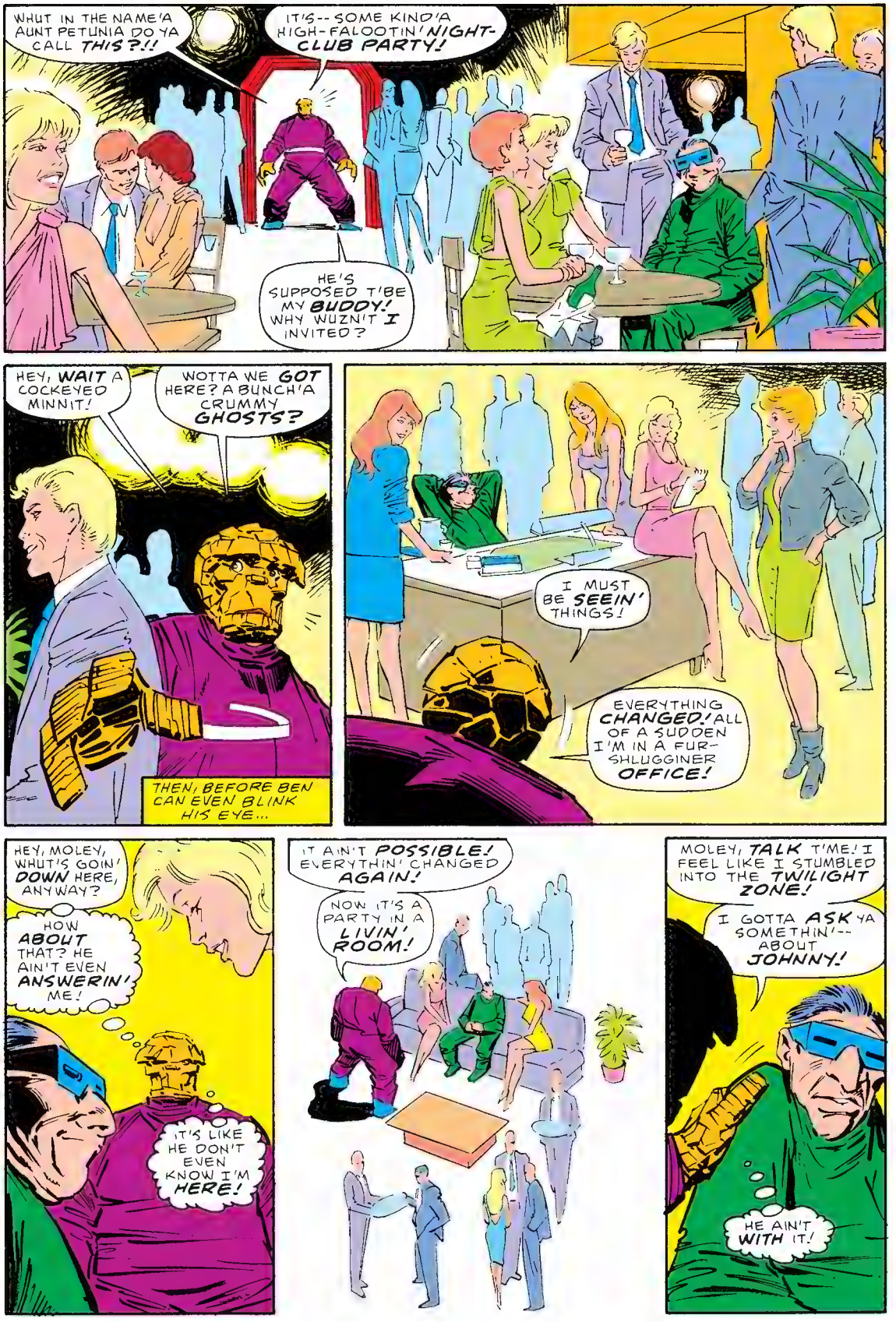

SUE!
HANG ON, DARLING! I'M COMING!
IF YOU'RE HURT, BEN WILL ANSWER TO ME!
IZZAT A FACT, STRETCHO? YA EXPECT ME TA TREMBLE IN MY BOOTIES?
YOU'VE HAD IT, EGG-HEAD! I'M MISTER BIG DOWN HERE!
I'M THE ONE YOU HATE THE MOST, BEN!
IF YOU WANTED REVENGE, YOU SHOULD HAVE COME AFTER ME!
THERE WAS NO REASON TO HURT SUE--AND JOHNNY!
BUT THERE'S MORE AT STAKE THAN US! THE MOLE MAN'S MACHINE ISN'T WHAT YOU THINK IT IS!
SHUDDUP! YOU AIN'T TALKIN' YER WAY OUTTA THIS ONE!
I'M SICK 'A YER PREACHIN' --SICK 'A YOU ALWAYS MIXIN' ME UP!
THE MOLE MAN'S MY FRIEND, Y'HEAR? HE'S MY FRIEND!


I THOUGHT I WAS FINALLY RID OF YA! FINALLY HAD YOU OUTTA MY LIFE!
WHY COULDN'T YA JUST LEAVE BAD ENOUGH ALONE?!
THAT'S ENOUGH, MY FRIEND.
IF RICHARDS STILL WANTS HIS YOUNG PARTNER, HE MAY--
--TAKE HIM!
NO!
4
JOHNNY! IS THAT-- YOU?
MOLE MAN --DID THIS TO ME!
HE TURNED ME INTO ONE OF-- THEM!

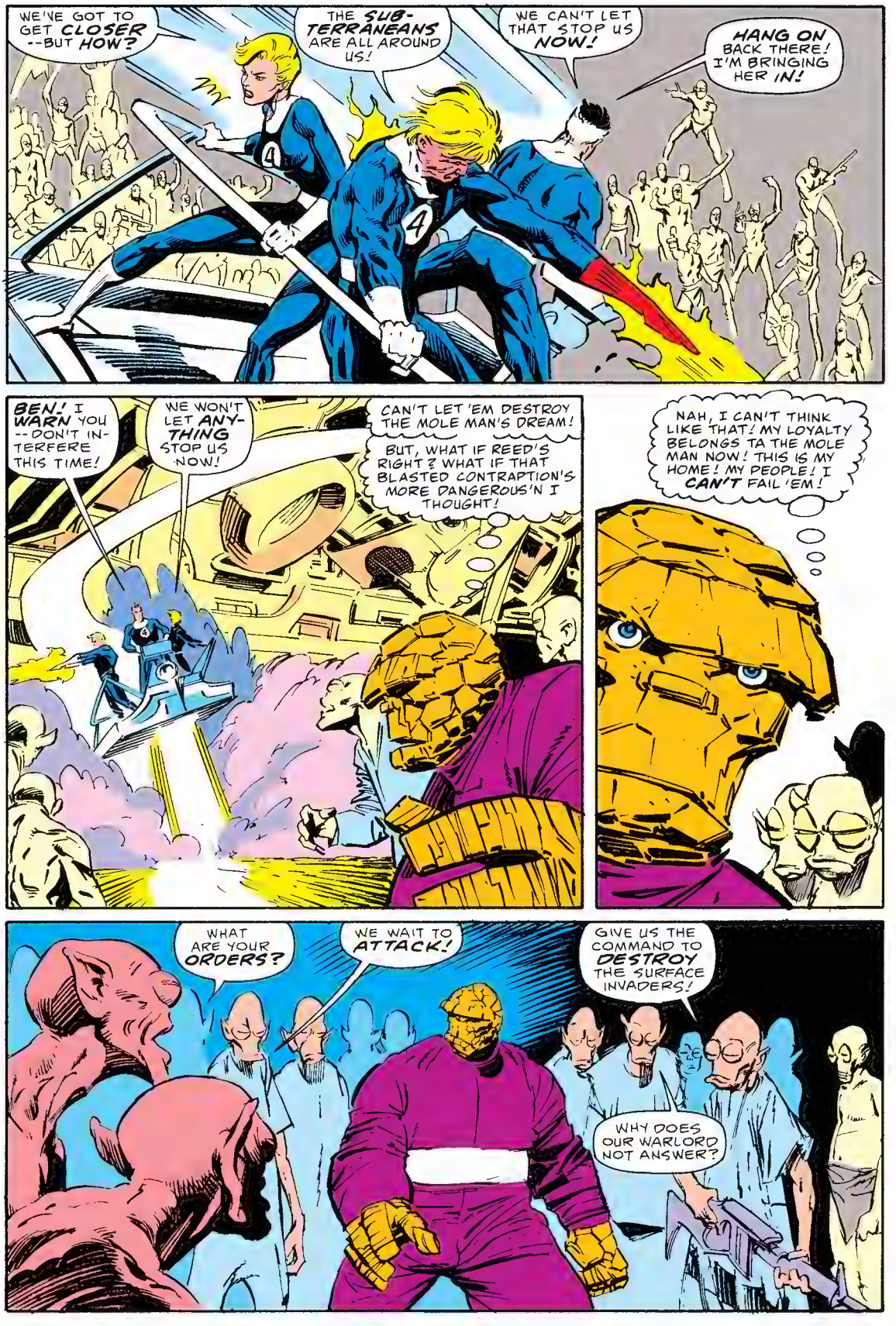
TOO STUNNED TO FIGHT ANYMORE, TOO SHAKEN BY THE SHEER HORROR OF WHAT THEY HAVE SEEN, SUE AND REED LOOK ON IN SHOCK AS BEN SOFTLY MUTTERS TO HIMSELF...
I TOLD 'EM--NOT TO COME.
WITHOUT LIFTING HIS HEAD, WITHOUT ANOTHER GLANCE, BEN ISSUES HIS FINAL ORDER, IN A VOICE AS LIFELESS AS LEAD...
IT'S OVER. TAKE THEM TO THE SURFACE--
THE BLIND GIRL, TOO.
MINUTES LATER, AS THE NUMBNESS SLOWLY WEARS OFF...
WHERE IS HOPPER? I NEED HIM TO LOOK AFTER ALICIA AND JOHNNY.
WHY, REED? WE'RE ALL TOGETHER NOW. WE CAN LOOK AFTER THEM. WE WON'T LEAVE THEM ANYMORE.
HEY, DID I HEAR SOMEONE CALL MY NAME?
WE HAVE TO GO BACK, SUE! THERE'S NO OTHER WAY!
NO! IT'S MADNESS! THERE'S BEEN ENOUGH FIGHTING, ENOUGH HORROR!
REVENGE IS MEANINGLESS! LET IT REST!
I'M NOT THINKING OF REVENGE.
"IT'S THE MOLE MAN'S MACHINE! I'VE ANALYZED ITS CONSTRUCTION, ITS POTENTIAL, AND I'M CONVINCED I KNOW ITS PURPOSE! THE MOLE MAN INTENDS TO ARTIFICIALLY INITIATE VOLCANIC UPLIFTING IN ORDER TO CREATE AN ISLAND!
"BUT TO DO SO MEANS SHIFTING THE PACIFIC TECTONIC PLATE, SINKING ALL OF CALIFORNIA AND DESTROYING THE ENTIRE PACIFIC COAST!
"THE MOLE MAN WILL GET HIS ISLAND, AT THE COST OF MILLIONS OF HUMAN LIVES!

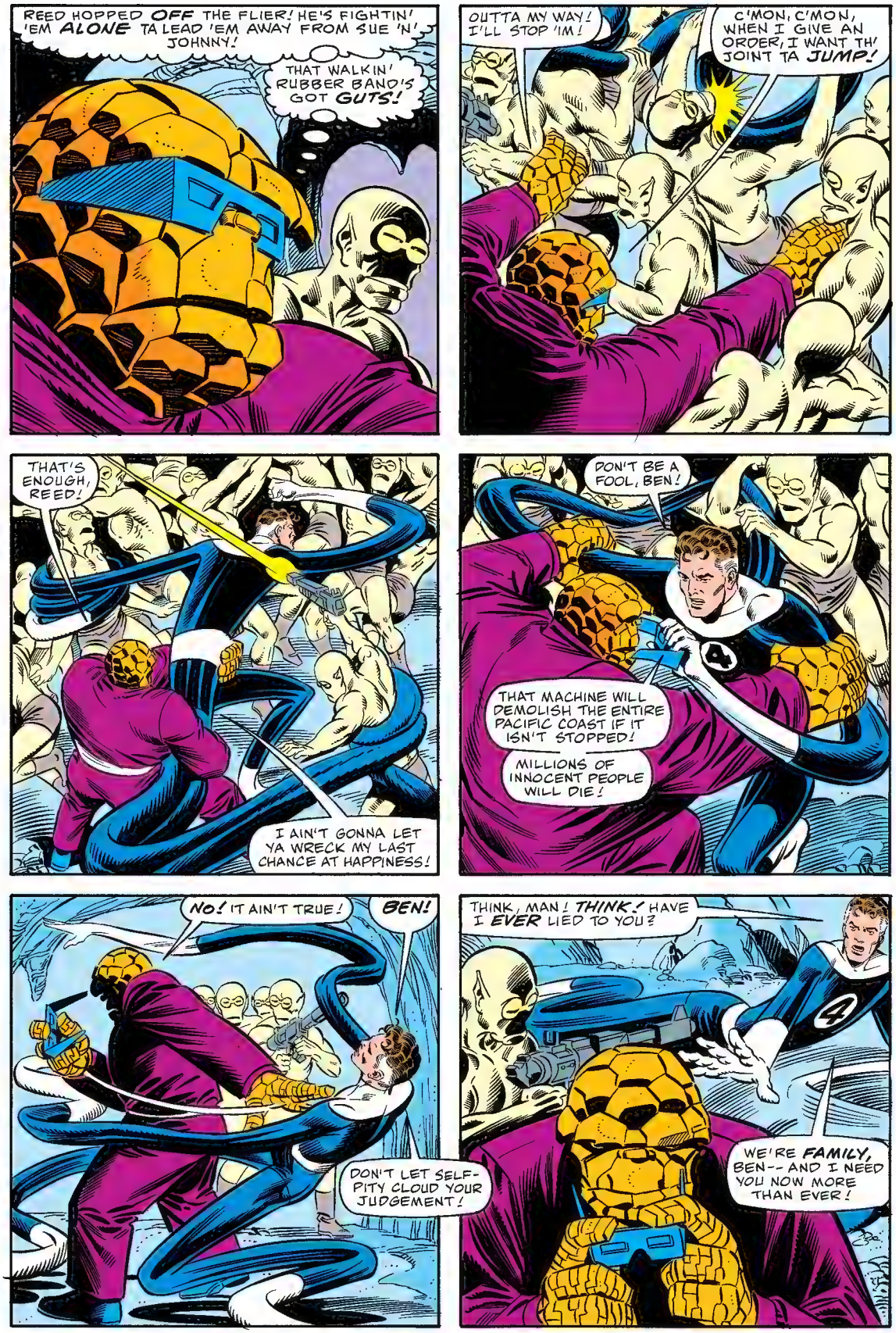
"THINK, SUE! YOU CANNOT HAVE A VAST SUBOCEANIC UPHEAVAL WITHOUT DESTROYING THE SURROUNDING LAND MASSES!
"THE MOLE MAN IS A SCIENTIFIC GENIUS -- HE KNOWS THE CONSEQUENCES! BUT IN HIS MADNESS, HE DOESN'T CARE!
"AS FOR BEN, HE'S JUST AN INNOCENT DUPE WHOSE ONLY MISTAKE IS PUTTING HIS TRUST IN THE WRONG MAN!"
THEY MUST BE STOPPED, NO MATTER WHAT!
HOPPER, YOU STAY HERE AND LOOK AFTER ALICIA AND JOHNNY.
IF WE'RE NOT BACK IN ONE HOUR, YOU THREE LEAVE WITHOUT US! YOU'VE GOT TO WARN THE COUNTRY.
HOLD IT, MISTER! I MAY BE A MONSTER, BUT I'M NOT HELPLESS!
I'M GOIN' WITH YOU! I'VE GOT A STAKE IN THIS, TOO!
I HEARD WHAT REED SAID! I KNOW THE DANGER! KISS ME, JOHNNY, ONE LAST TIME BEFORE YOU GO!
KISS YOU?
I-I CAN'T! DON'T ASK ME!
NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME, I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND -- HOW BEN MUST HAVE FELT!


AND, EVEN AS A HEARTBROKEN JOHNNY SLOWLY TURNS AWAY FROM THE GIRL HE LOVES...
I'VE GOTTA TALK TO YA. THERE'S THINGS I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
NOT NOW, BENJAMIN. I MUST ENTER MY TREATMENT ROOM!
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE KID? THERE WUZ NO CALL FOR YA TO DO WHAT YA DID TO JOHNNY!
HE IS YOUR ENEMY! THAT IS REASON ENOUGH!
JOHNNY? MY ENEMY? I NEVER SAID--
WE WILL DISCUSS IT LATER! I MUST GO NOW!
BUT, I WANTED TO ASK ABOUT YER MACHINE, TOO! HEY--
TOO LATE! THE DOOR IS SHUT! NONE MAY DISTURB HIM!
THAT IS THE LAW!
THE LAW, HUH?
HERE'S WHAT YA CAN DO WIT' YER COCKA-MAMIE LAW!
ANYONE WHO'S GOT TIME TA TURN A KID INTO A MONSTER--
--BETTER HAVE TIME TA TALK ABOUT IT!

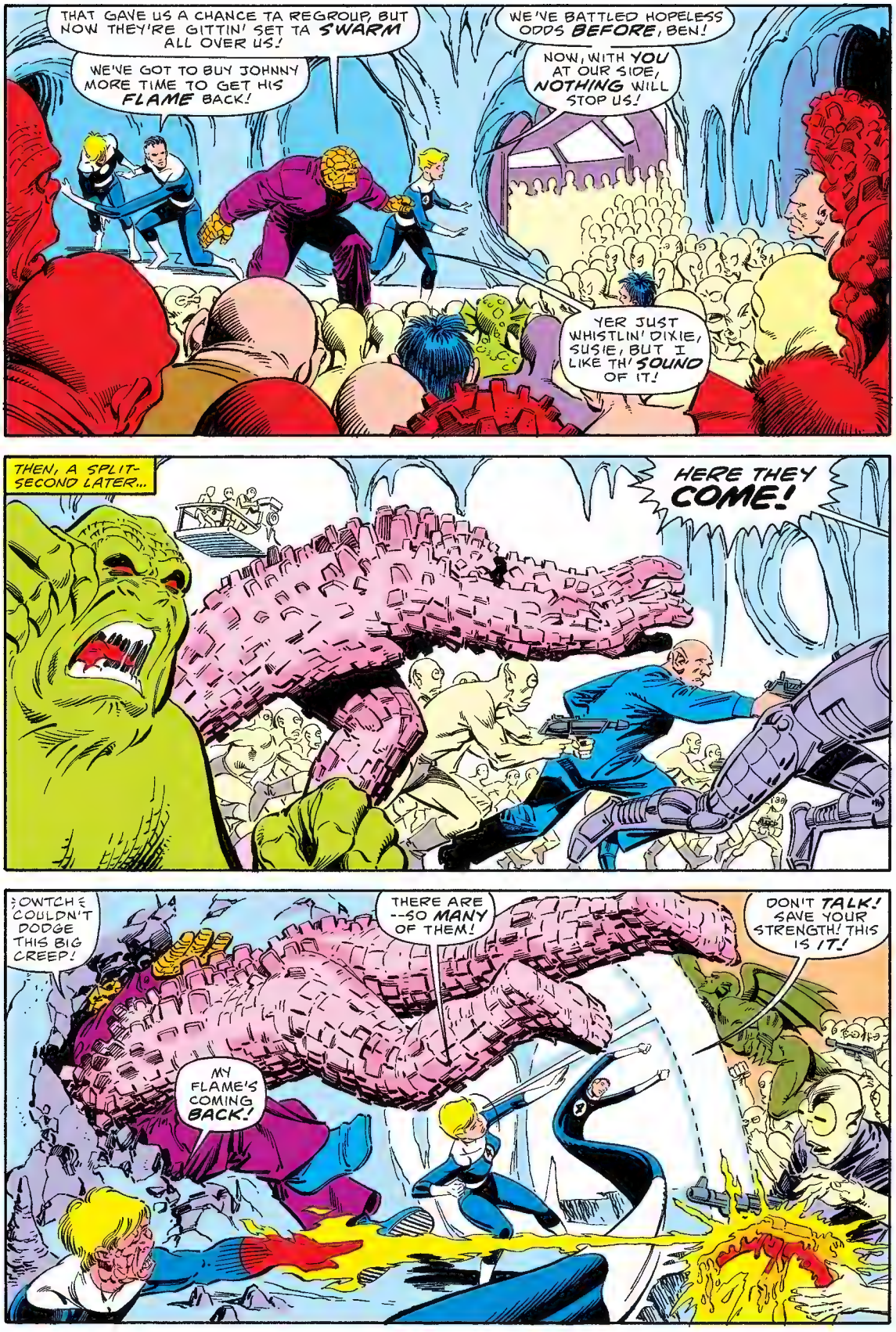

WHUT IN THE NAME'A AUNT PETUNIA DO YA CALL THIS?!!
IT'S-- SOME KIND'A HIGH-FALOOTIN' NIGHT-CLUB PARTY!
HE'S SUPPOSED T'BE MY BUDDY! WHY WUZN'T I INVITED?
HEY, WAIT A COCKEYED MINNIT!
WOTTA WE GOT HERE? A BUNCH'A CRUMMY GHOSTS?
THEN, BEFORE BEN CAN EVEN BLINK HIS EYE...
I MUST BE SEEIN' THINGS!
EVERYTHING CHANGED! ALL OF A SUDDEN I'M IN A FUR-SHLUGGINER OFFICE!
HEY, MOLEY, WHUT'S GOIN' DOWN HERE, ANYWAY?
HOW ABOUT THAT? HE AIN'T EVEN ANSWERIN' ME!
IT'S LIKE HE DON'T EVEN KNOW I'M HERE!
IT AIN'T POSSIBLE! EVERYTHIN' CHANGED AGAIN!
NOW IT'S A PARTY IN A LIVIN' ROOM!
MOLEY, TALK T'ME! I FEEL LIKE I STUMBLED INTO THE TWILIGHT ZONE!
I GOTTA ASK YA SOMETHIN'-- ABOUT JOHNNY!
HE AIN'T WITH IT!

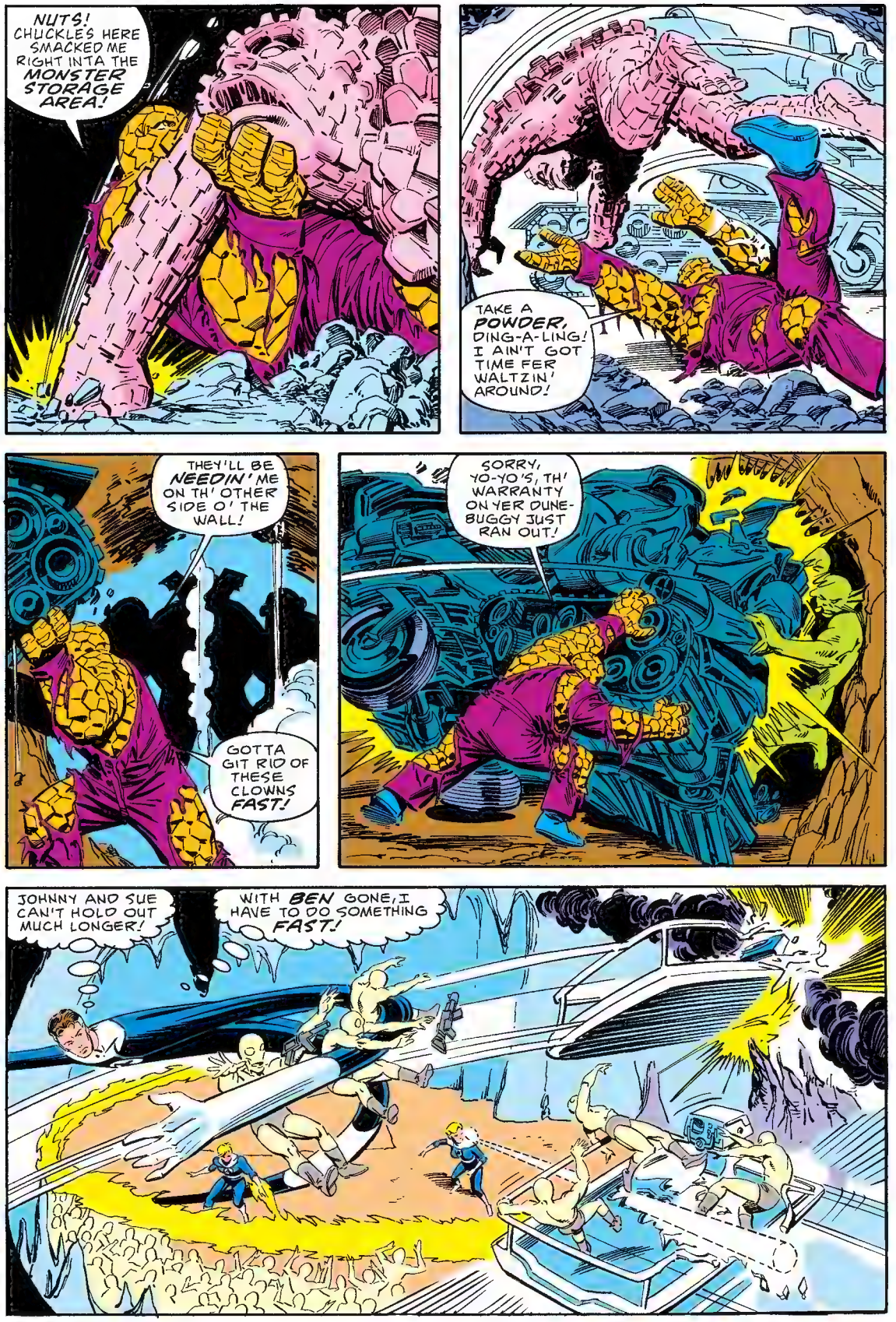
HEY, D'YA HEAR ME? SNAP OUTTA IT!
YA GOTTA CHANGE JOHNNY BACK TO TH' WAY HE WUZ!
WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER, BEN.
NOW, MY PRETTY, AS YOU WERE SAYING...
IT'S LOONYVILLE! HE'S TALKIN' TA GHOSTS, IN ROOMS THAT KEEP CHANGIN', AN'--
HEY! WHAT'S THAT RACKET OUTSIDE?
IT'S JUST MOLEY'S LITTLE ARMY A'WHOOPIN' AND HOLLERIN' ABOUT SOMETHIN', LIKE USUAL!
MEBBE I BETTER THINK THINGS OVER ABOUT TH' MOLE MAN!
HE TALKS ABOUT US UGLIES BANDIN' TOGETHER, BUT THEN HE SNEAKS OFF IN SECRET TA BE WITH A BUNCH'A DYNAMITE FEMALES 'N' HANDSOME GUYS IN HIS OWN PRIVATE WORLD!
'CEPTIN' THEY AIN'T REAL PEOPLE! THEY'RE HOLOGRAMS THAT HE CREATED!
MEANWHILE, THE REASON FOR ALL THE COMMOTION IS FAST APPROACHING...
WITH MY FLAME SO WEAK, IT'LL BE TOUGH TO TOTAL THE MOLE MAN'S MACHINE!
WE MUST KEEP TRYING! WE'LL DO IT SOMEHOW!
DON'T EVEN THINK OF FAILING! TOO MANY LIVES ARE AT STAKE!


WE'VE GOT TO GET CLOSER --BUT HOW?
THE SUB-TERRANEANS ARE ALL AROUND US!
WE CAN'T LET THAT STOP US NOW!
HANG ON BACK THERE! I'M BRINGING HER IN!
BEN! I WARN YOU --DON'T INTERFERE THIS TIME!
WE WON'T LET ANYTHING STOP US NOW!
CAN'T LET 'EM DESTROY THE MOLE MAN'S DREAM!
BUT, WHAT IF REED'S RIGHT? WHAT IF THAT BLASTED CONTRAPTION'S MORE DANGEROUS'N I THOUGHT!
NAH, I CAN'T THINK LIKE THAT! MY LOYALTY BELONGS TA THE MOLE MAN NOW! THIS IS MY HOME! MY PEOPLE! I CAN'T FAIL 'EM!
WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS?
WE WAIT TO ATTACK!
GIVE US THE COMMAND TO DESTROY THE SURFACE INVADERS!
WHY DOES OUR WARLORD NOT ANSWER?

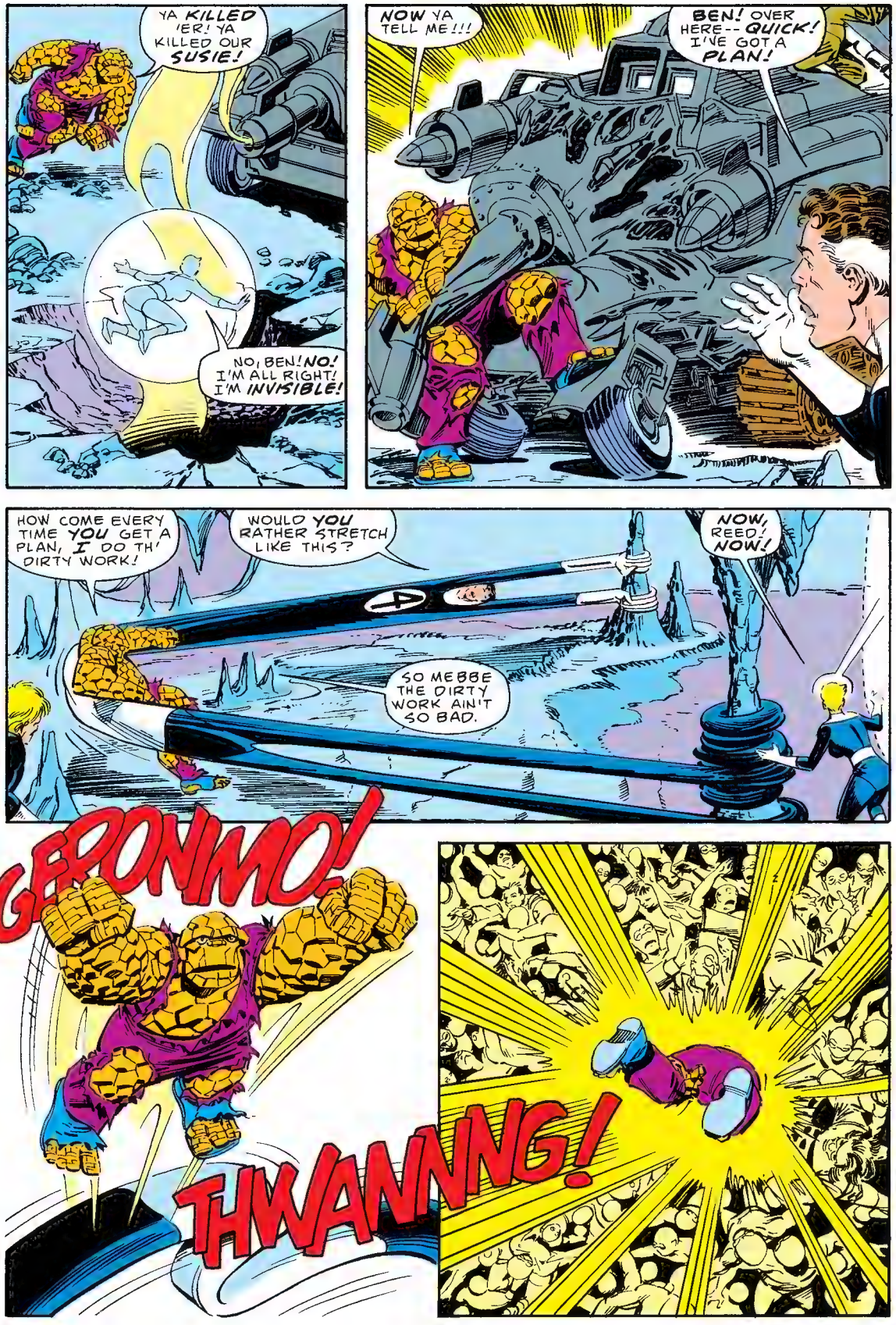

REED HOPPED OFF THE FLIER! HE'S FIGHTIN' 'EM ALONE TA LEAD 'EM AWAY FROM SUE 'N' JOHNNY!
THAT WALKIN' RUBBER BAND'S GOT GUTS!
OUTTA MY WAY! I'LL STOP 'IM!
C'MON, C'MON, WHEN I GIVE AN ORDER, I WANT TH' JOINT TA JUMP!
THAT'S ENOUGH, REED!
I AIN'T GONNA LET YA WRECK MY LAST CHANCE AT HAPPINESS!
DON'T BE A FOOL, BEN!
THAT MACHINE WILL DEMOLISH THE ENTIRE PACIFIC COAST IF IT ISN'T STOPPED!
MILLIONS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE WILL DIE!
NO! IT AIN'T TRUE!
BEN!
DON'T LET SELF-PITY CLOUD YOUR JUDGEMENT!
THINK, MAN! THINK! HAVE I EVER LIED TO YOU?
WE'RE FAMILY, BEN-- AND I NEED YOU NOW MORE THAN EVER!

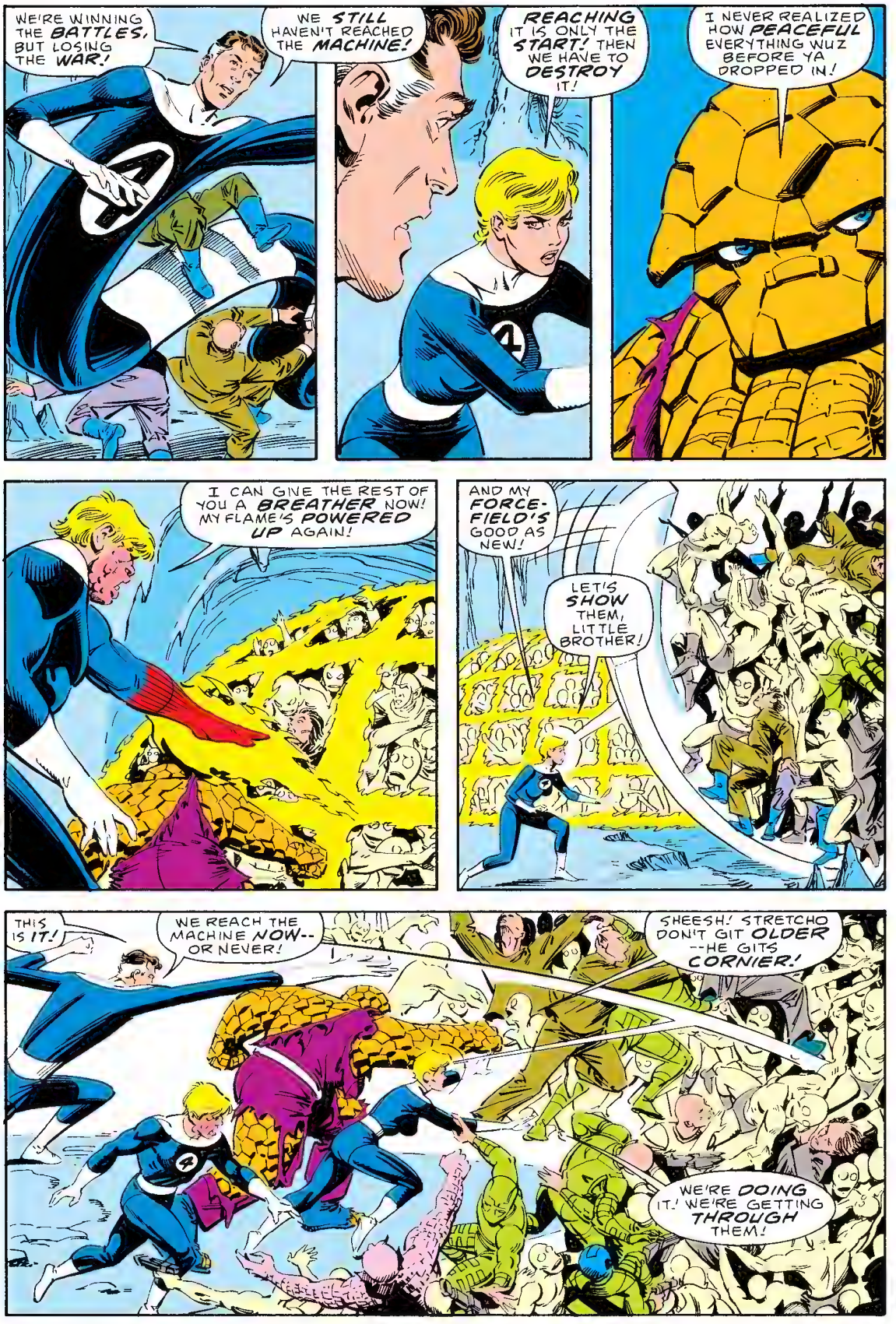
SO INTENT IS REED RICHARDS ON CONVINCING BEN, THAT HE DOESN'T SEE THE BLAST RAY AIMED AT HIM UNTIL TOO LATE...
ZSSKT!
UNNNNHH
HEY, GIMME THAT POPGUN, YA CREEP!
IF ANYONE'S GONNA CLOBBER THAT STRETCHED-OUT STRINGBEAN, IT'LL BE ME!
THANKS, BEN.
DON'T THANK ME, SONNY-BOY! I DIDN'T DO IT FER YOU!
IF YOU WUZ RIGHT ABOUT MOLEY'S MACHINE KILLIN' MILLIONS O' PEOPLE UPSTAIRS, I FIGGER IT'LL TAKE ALL OF US T'STOP IT!
THEN WHAT'RE WE WAITING FOR, BIG MAN? IT'LL BE JUST LIKE OLD TIMES!
KNOW SOMETHIN', STRETCHO? YER AS CORNY AS EVER.
LET'S SEE IF YA CAN FIGHT WITH-OUT MAKIN' SPEECHES!
SURE I CAN, BUT IT'S NOT AS MUCH FUN!
WELCOME TO CLOBBERIN' TIME!
LET'S GO, KIDDIES--

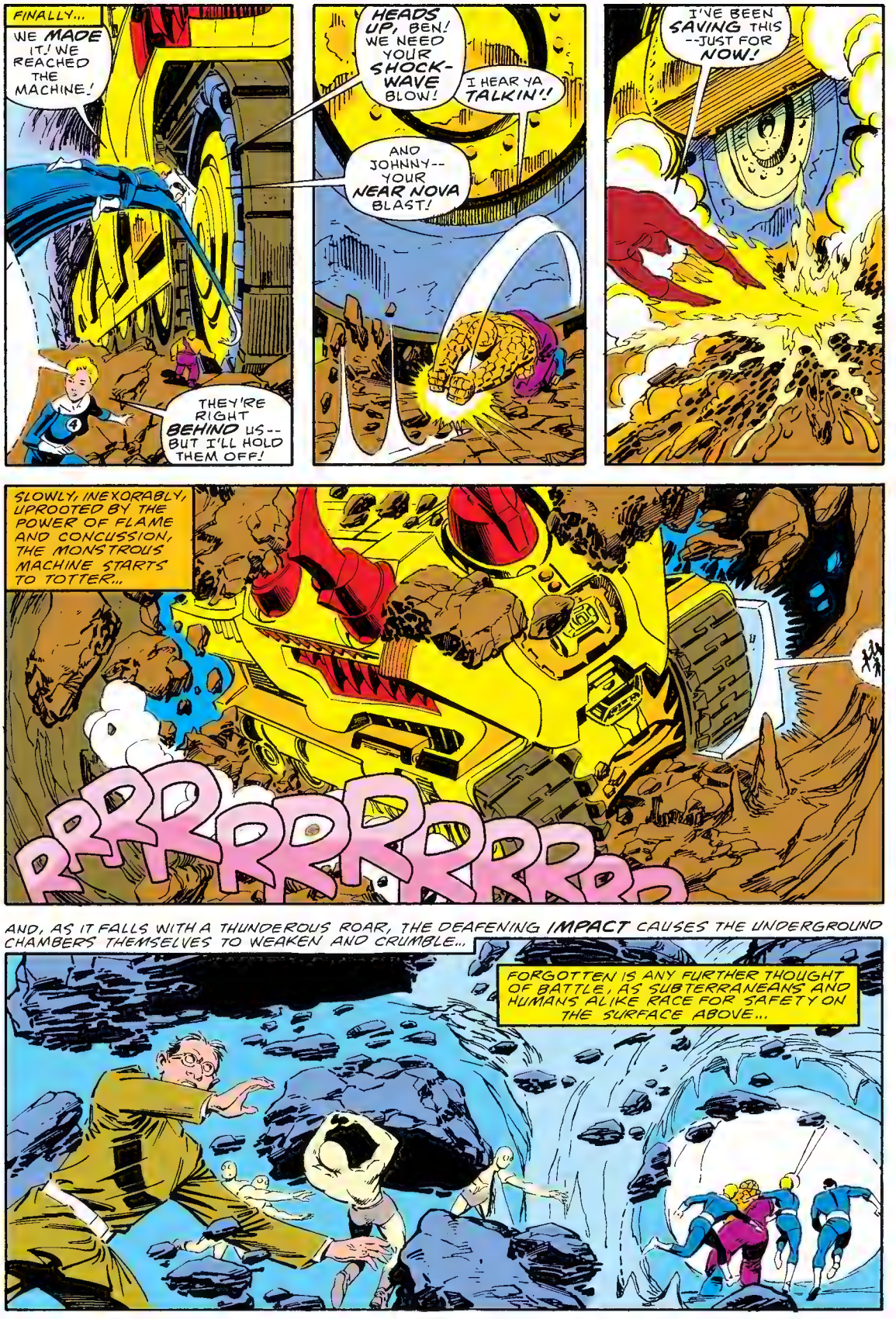

THAT GAVE US A CHANCE TA REGROUP, BUT NOW THEY'RE GITTIN' SET TA SWARM ALL OVER US!
WE'VE GOT TO BUY JOHNNY MORE TIME TO GET HIS FLAME BACK!
WE'VE BATTLED HOPELESS ODDS BEFORE, BEN!
NOW, WITH YOU AT OUR SIDE, NOTHING WILL STOP US!
YER JUST WHISTLIN' DIXIE, SUSIE, BUT I LIKE TH' SOUND OF IT!
THEN, A SPLIT-SECOND LATER...
HERE THEY COME!
OWTCH! COULDN'T DODGE THIS BIG CREEP!
THERE ARE --SO MANY OF THEM!
DON'T TALK! SAVE YOUR STRENGTH! THIS IS IT!
MY FLAME'S COMING BACK!

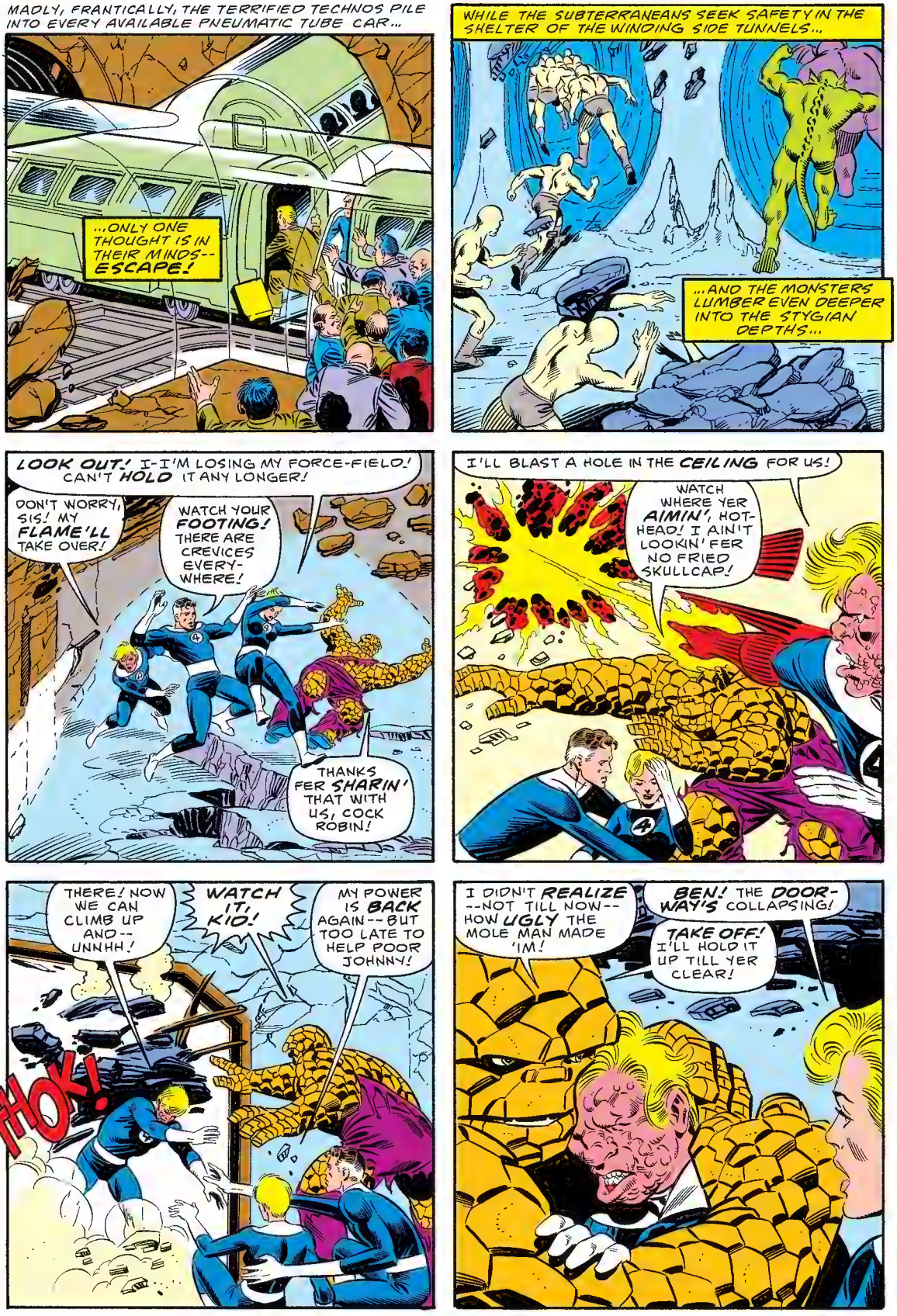

NUTS! CHUCKLE'S HERE SMACKED ME RIGHT INTA THE MONSTER STORAGE AREA!
TAKE A POWDER, DING-A-LING! I AIN'T GOT TIME FER WALTZIN' AROUND!
THEY'LL BE NEEDIN' ME ON TH' OTHER SIDE O' THE WALL!
GOTTA GIT RID OF THESE CLOWNS FAST!
SORRY, YO-YO'S, TH' WARRANTY ON YER DUNE-BUGGY JUST RAN OUT!
JOHNNY AND SUE CAN'T HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER!
WITH BEN GONE, I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING FAST!

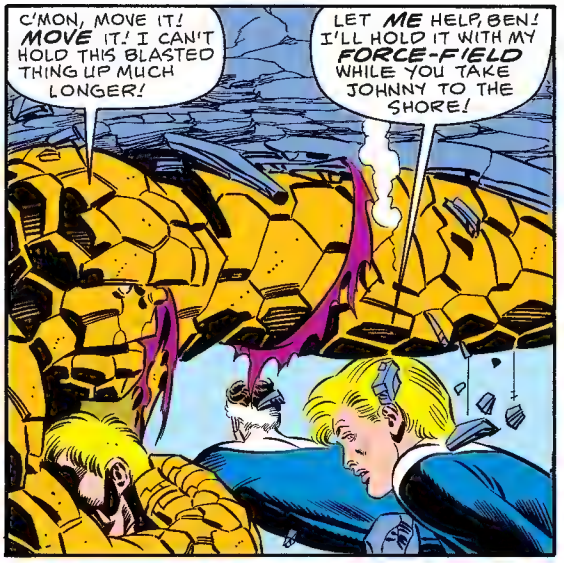
SUE! JOHNNY! GET BEHIND ME! I'LL TRY TO SHIELD YOU!
IT'S NO GOOD! THEY CAN'T HEAR ME OVER ALL THE FIRING!
I'VE GOT TO NEUTRALIZE THEIR WEAPONRY FAST!
THIS IS ONE WAY TO DO IT!
SUE! WHERE ARE YOU?
I'M OKAY, DARLING! I'M OVER HERE!
BEHIND YOU, SUSIE! LOOK OUT!
AT THAT MOMENT, BEN GRIMM RETURNS...
AW, NO! NO!

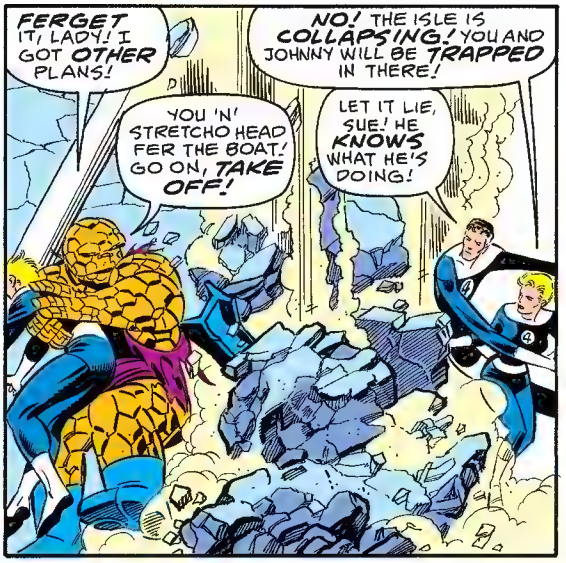

YA KILLED 'ER! YA KILLED OUR SUSIE!
NO, BEN! NO! I'M ALL RIGHT! I'M INVISIBLE!
NOW YA TELL ME!!!
BEN! OVER HERE-- QUICK! I'VE GOT A PLAN!
HOW COME EVERY TIME YOU GET A PLAN, I DO TH' DIRTY WORK!
WOULD YOU RATHER STRETCH LIKE THIS?
SO MEBBE THE DIRTY WORK AIN'T SO BAD.
NOW, REED! NOW!
GERONIMO!
THWANNNG!

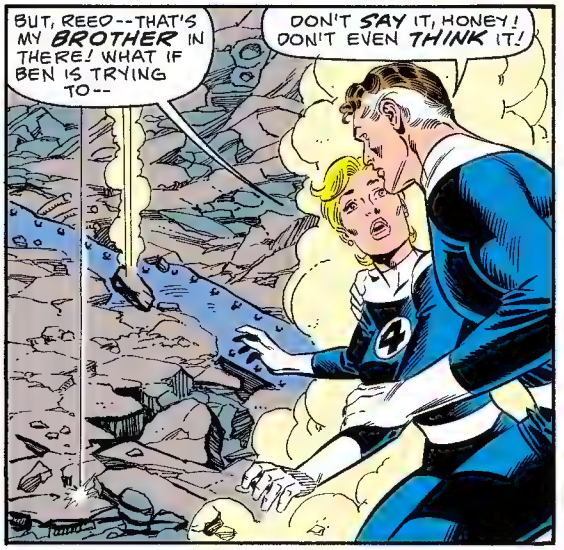

WE'RE WINNING THE BATTLES, BUT LOSING THE WAR!
WE STILL HAVEN'T REACHED THE MACHINE!
REACHING IT IS ONLY THE START! THEN WE HAVE TO DESTROY IT!
I NEVER REALIZED HOW PEACEFUL EVERYTHING WUZ BEFORE YA DROPPED IN!
I CAN GIVE THE REST OF YOU A BREATHER NOW! MY FLAME'S POWERED UP AGAIN!
AND MY FORCE-FIELD'S GOOD AS NEW!
LET'S SHOW THEM, LITTLE BROTHER!
THIS IS IT!
WE REACH THE MACHINE NOW-- OR NEVER!
SHEESH! STRETCHO DON'T GIT OLDER --HE GITS CORNIER!
WE'RE DOING IT! WE'RE GETTING THROUGH THEM!

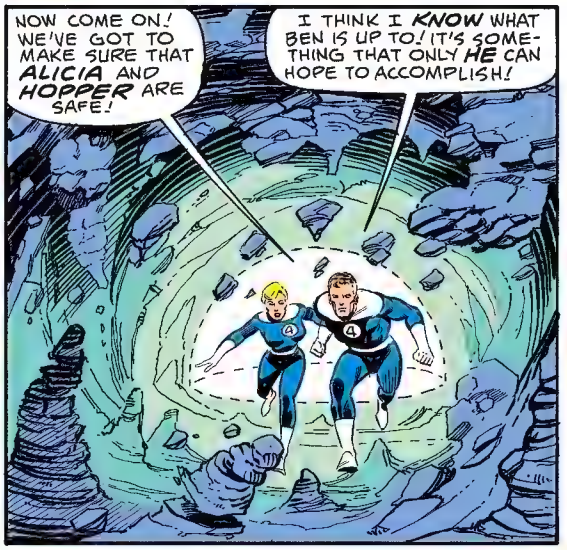

FINALLY...
WE MADE IT! WE REACHED THE MACHINE!
THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND US-- BUT I'LL HOLD THEM OFF!
HEADS UP, BEN! WE NEED YOUR SHOCK-WAVE BLOW!
I HEAR YA TALKIN'!
AND JOHNNY-- YOUR NEAR NOVA BLAST!
I'VE BEEN SAVING THIS --JUST FOR NOW!
SLOWLY, INEXORABLY, UPROOTED BY THE POWER OF FLAME AND CONCUSSION, THE MONSTROUS MACHINE STARTS TO TOTTER...
RRRRRRRRRRRD
AND, AS IT FALLS WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR, THE DEAFENING IMPACT CAUSES THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBERS THEMSELVES TO WEAKEN AND CRUMBLE...
FORGOTTEN IS ANY FURTHER THOUGHT OF BATTLE, AS SUBTERRANEANS AND HUMANS ALIKE RACE FOR SAFETY ON THE SURFACE ABOVE...

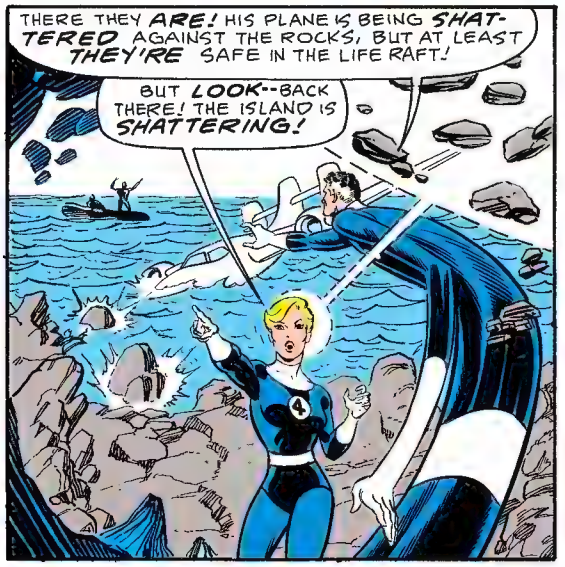

MADLY, FRANTICALLY, THE TERRIFIED TECHNOS PILE INTO EVERY AVAILABLE PNEUMATIC TUBE CAR...
...ONLY ONE THOUGHT IS IN THEIR MINDS-- ESCAPE!
WHILE THE SUBTERRANEANS SEEK SAFETY IN THE SHELTER OF THE WINDING SIDE TUNNELS...
...AND THE MONSTERS LUMBER EVEN DEEPER INTO THE STYGIAN DEPTHS...
LOOK OUT! I-I'M LOSING MY FORCE-FIELD! CAN'T HOLD IT ANY LONGER!
DON'T WORRY, SIS! MY FLAME'LL TAKE OVER!
WATCH YOUR FOOTING! THERE ARE CREVICES EVERY-WHERE!
THANKS FER SHARIN' THAT WITH US, COCK ROBIN!
I'LL BLAST A HOLE IN THE CEILING FOR US!
WATCH WHERE YER AIMIN', HOT-HEAD! I AIN'T LOOKIN' FER NO FRIED SKULLCAP!
THOK!
THERE! NOW WE CAN CLIMB UP AND-- UNNHH!
WATCH IT, KID!
MY POWER IS BACK AGAIN--BUT TOO LATE TO HELP POOR JOHNNY!
I DIDN'T REALIZE --NOT TILL NOW-- HOW UGLY THE MOLE MAN MADE 'IM!
BEN! THE DOOR-WAY'S COLLAPSING!
TAKE OFF! I'LL HOLD IT UP TILL YER CLEAR!

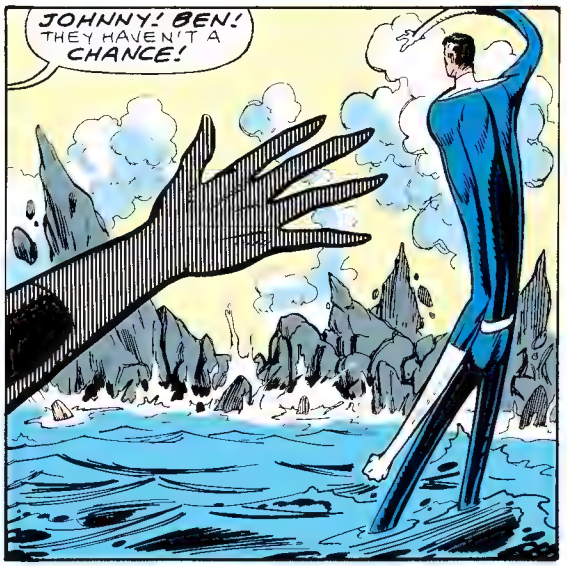

C'MON, MOVE IT! MOVE IT! I CAN'T HOLD THIS BLASTED THING UP MUCH LONGER!
LET ME HELP, BEN! I'LL HOLD IT WITH MY FORCE-FIELD WHILE YOU TAKE JOHNNY TO THE SHORE!

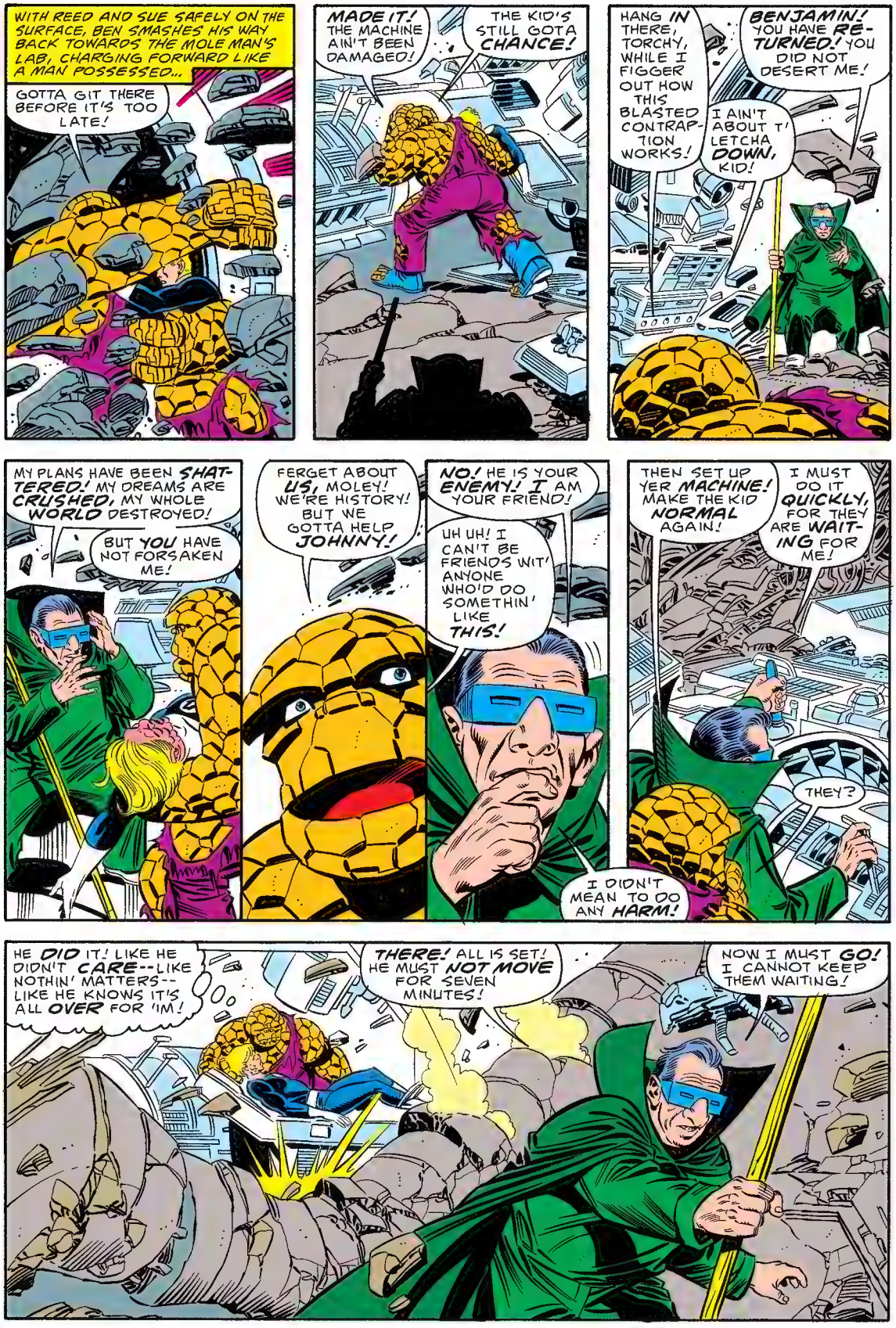

FERGET IT, LADY! I GOT OTHER PLANS!
NO! THE ISLE IS COLLAPSING! YOU AND JOHNNY WILL BE TRAPPED IN THERE!
YOU 'N' STRETCHO HEAD FER THE BOAT! GO ON, TAKE OFF!
LET IT LIE, SUE! HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!

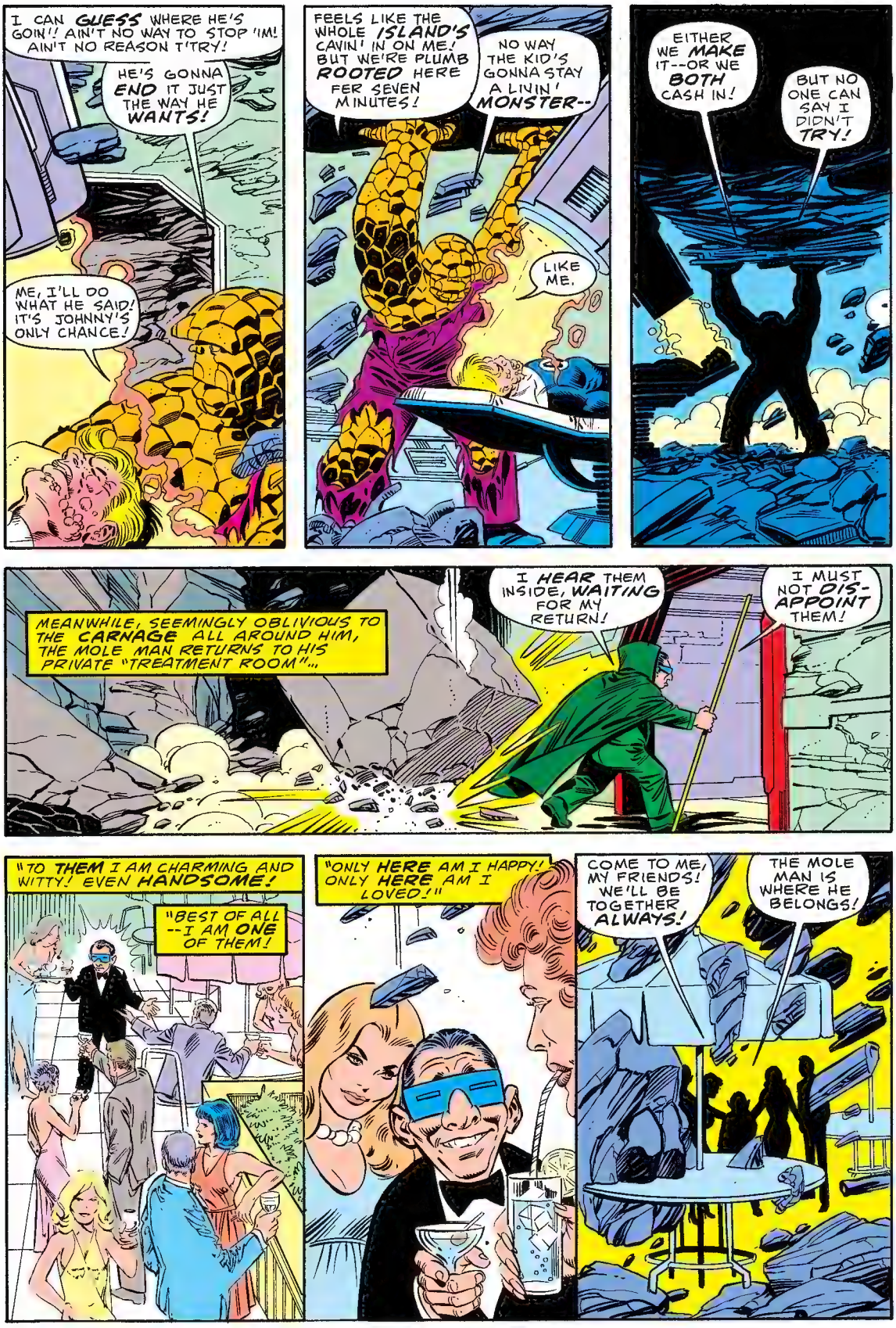

BUT, REED--THAT'S MY BROTHER IN THERE! WHAT IF BEN IS TRYING TO--
DON'T SAY IT, HONEY! DON'T EVEN THINK IT!

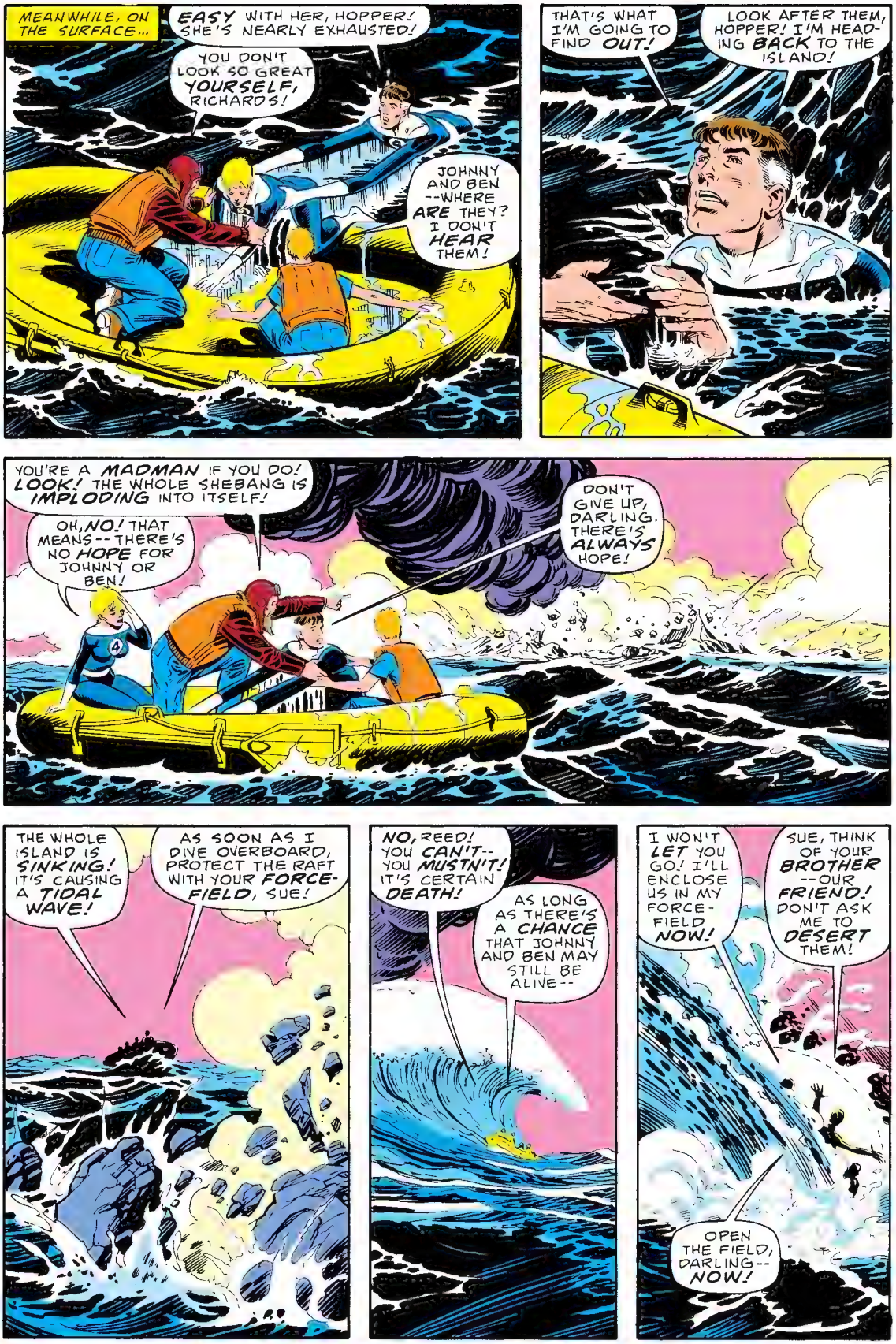

NOW COME ON! WE'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE THAT ALICIA AND HOPPER ARE SAFE!
I THINK I KNOW WHAT BEN IS UP TO! IT'S SOMETHING THAT ONLY HE CAN HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH!

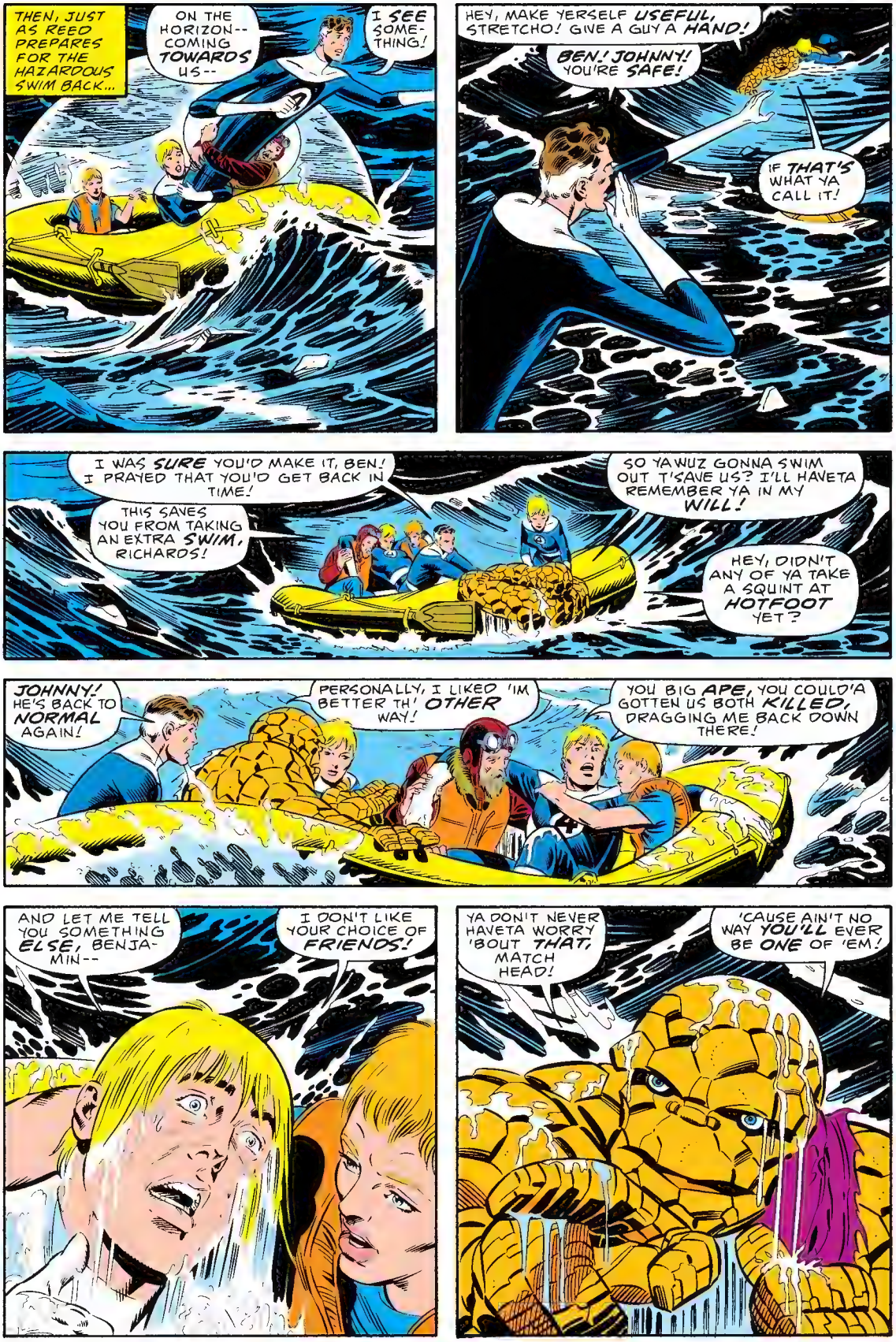

THERE THEY ARE! HIS PLANE IS BEING SHATTERED AGAINST THE ROCKS, BUT AT LEAST THEY'RE SAFE IN THE LIFE RAFT!
BUT LOOK--BACK THERE! THE ISLAND IS SHATTERING!

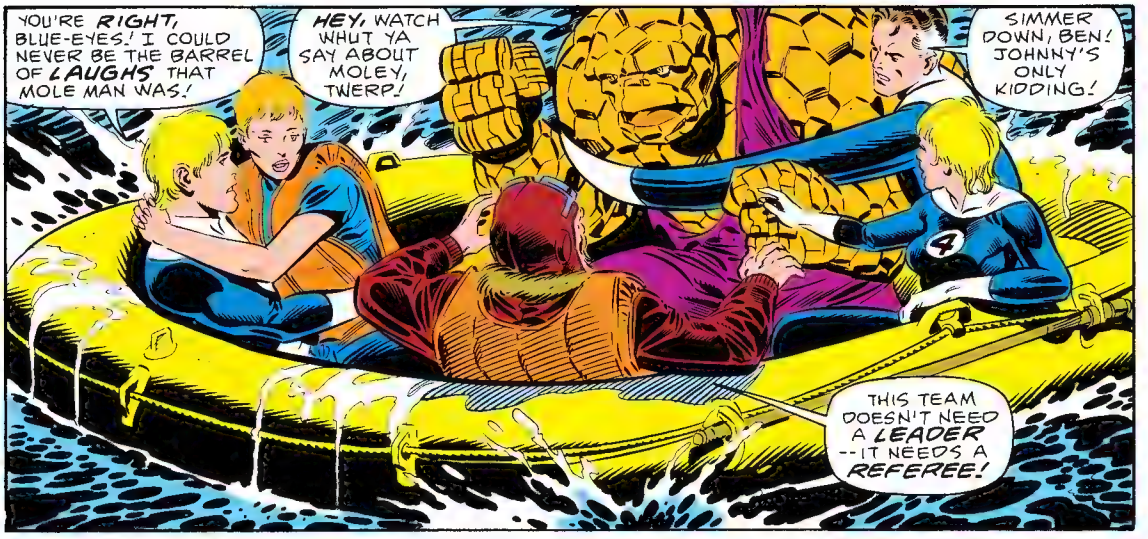

JOHNNY! BEN! THEY HAVEN'T A CHANCE!


WITH REED AND SUE SAFELY ON THE SURFACE, BEN SMASHES HIS WAY BACK TOWARDS THE MOLE MAN'S LAB, CHARGING FORWARD LIKE A MAN POSSESSED...
GOTTA GIT THERE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
MADE IT! THE MACHINE AIN'T BEEN DAMAGED!
THE KID'S STILL GOTA CHANCE!
HANG IN THERE, TORCHY, WHILE I FIGGER OUT HOW THIS BLASTED CONTRAPTION WORKS!
BENJAMIN! YOU HAVE RE-TURNED! YOU DID NOT DESERT ME!
I AIN'T ABOUT T' LETCHA DOWN, KID!
MY PLANS HAVE BEEN SHATTERED! MY DREAMS ARE CRUSHED, MY WHOLE WORLD DESTROYED!
BUT YOU HAVE NOT FORSAKEN ME!
FERGET ABOUT US, MOLEY! WE'RE HISTORY! BUT WE GOTTA HELP JOHNNY!
NO! HE IS YOUR ENEMY! I AM YOUR FRIEND!
UH UH! I CAN'T BE FRIENDS WIT' ANYONE WHO'D DO SOMETHIN' LIKE THIS!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO DO ANY HARM!
THEN SET UP YER MACHINE! MAKE THE KID NORMAL AGAIN!
I MUST DO IT QUICKLY, FOR THEY ARE WAITING FOR ME!
THEY?
HE DID IT! LIKE HE DIDN'T CARE--LIKE NOTHIN' MATTERS--LIKE HE KNOWS IT'S ALL OVER FOR 'IM!
THERE! ALL IS SET! HE MUST NOT MOVE FOR SEVEN MINUTES!
NOW I MUST GO! I CANNOT KEEP THEM WAITING!


I CAN GUESS WHERE HE'S GOIN'! AIN'T NO WAY TO STOP 'IM! AIN'T NO REASON T'TRY!
HE'S GONNA END IT JUST THE WAY HE WANTS!
ME, I'LL DO WHAT HE SAID! IT'S JOHNNY'S ONLY CHANCE!
FEELS LIKE THE WHOLE ISLAND'S CAVIN' IN ON ME! BUT WE'RE PLUMB ROOTED HERE FER SEVEN MINUTES!
NO WAY THE KID'S GONNA STAY A LIVIN' MONSTER--
LIKE ME.
EITHER WE MAKE IT--OR WE BOTH CASH IN!
BUT NO ONE CAN SAY I DIDN'T TRY!
MEANWHILE, SEEMINGLY OBLIVIOUS TO THE CARNAGE ALL AROUND HIM, THE MOLE MAN RETURNS TO HIS PRIVATE "TREATMENT ROOM"...
I HEAR THEM INSIDE, WAITING FOR MY RETURN!
I MUST NOT DIS-APPOINT THEM!
"TO THEM I AM CHARMING AND WITTY! EVEN HANDSOME!
"BEST OF ALL --I AM ONE OF THEM!
"ONLY HERE AM I HAPPY! ONLY HERE AM I LOVED!"
COME TO ME, MY FRIENDS! WE'LL BE TOGETHER ALWAYS!
THE MOLE MAN IS WHERE HE BELONGS!


MEANWHILE, ON THE SURFACE...
EASY WITH HER, HOPPER! SHE'S NEARLY EXHAUSTED!
YOU DON'T LOOK SO GREAT YOURSELF, RICHARDS!
JOHNNY AND BEN --WHERE ARE THEY? I DON'T HEAR THEM!
THAT'S WHAT I'M GOING TO FIND OUT!
LOOK AFTER THEM, HOPPER! I'M HEADING BACK TO THE ISLAND!
YOU'RE A MADMAN IF YOU DO! LOOK! THE WHOLE SHEBANG IS IMPLODING INTO ITSELF!
OH, NO! THAT MEANS -- THERE'S NO HOPE FOR JOHNNY OR BEN!
DON'T GIVE UP, DARLING. THERE'S ALWAYS HOPE!
THE WHOLE ISLAND IS SINKING! IT'S CAUSING A TIDAL WAVE!
AS SOON AS I DIVE OVERBOARD, PROTECT THE RAFT WITH YOUR FORCE-FIELD, SUE!
NO, REED! YOU CAN'T-- YOU MUSTN'T! IT'S CERTAIN DEATH!
AS LONG AS THERE'S A CHANCE THAT JOHNNY AND BEN MAY STILL BE ALIVE--
I WON'T LET YOU GO! I'LL ENCLOSE US IN MY FORCE-FIELD NOW!
SUE, THINK OF YOUR BROTHER --OUR FRIEND! DON'T ASK ME TO DESERT THEM!
OPEN THE FIELD, DARLING-- NOW!


THEN, JUST AS REED PREPARES FOR THE HAZARDOUS SWIM BACK...
ON THE HORIZON-- COMING TOWARDS US--
I SEE SOME-THING!
HEY, MAKE YERSELF USEFUL, STRETCHO! GIVE A GUY A HAND!
BEN! JOHNNY! YOU'RE SAFE!
IF THAT'S WHAT YA CALL IT!
I WAS SURE YOU'D MAKE IT, BEN! I PRAYED THAT YOU'D GET BACK IN TIME!
THIS SAVES YOU FROM TAKING AN EXTRA SWIM, RICHARDS!
SO YA WUZ GONNA SWIM OUT T'SAVE US? I'LL HAVETA REMEMBER YA IN MY WILL!
HEY, DIDN'T ANY OF YA TAKE A SQUINT AT HOTFOOT YET?
JOHNNY! HE'S BACK TO NORMAL AGAIN!
PERSONALLY, I LIKED 'IM BETTER TH' OTHER WAY!
YOU BIG APE, YOU COULD'A GOTTEN US BOTH KILLED, DRAGGING ME BACK DOWN THERE!
AND LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING ELSE, BENJA-MIN--
I DON'T LIKE YOUR CHOICE OF FRIENDS!
YA DON'T NEVER HAVETA WORRY 'BOUT THAT, MATCH HEAD!
'CAUSE AIN'T NO WAY YOU'LL EVER BE ONE OF 'EM!


YOU'RE RIGHT, BLUE-EYES! I COULD NEVER BE THE BARREL OF LAUGHS THAT MOLE MAN WAS!
HEY, WATCH WHUT YA SAY ABOUT MOLEY, TWERP!
SIMMER DOWN, BEN! JOHNNY'S ONLY KIDDING!
THIS TEAM DOESN'T NEED A LEADER --IT NEEDS A REFEREE!

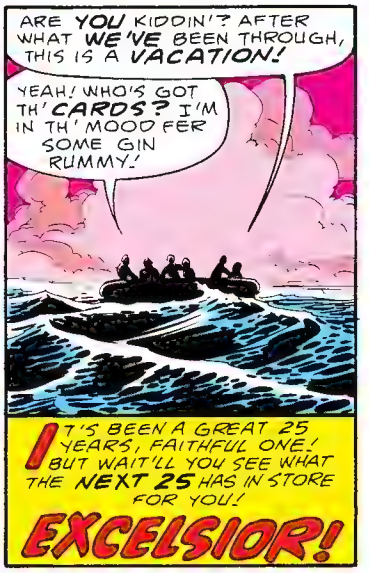
DON'T KID YOURSELF, HOPPER! DEEP DOWN, BEN AND JOHNNY REALLY LOVE EACH OTHER-- JUST LIKE WE ALL DO!
SURE, WE CAN FIGHT AMONG OURSELVES, BUT NOBODY ELSE BETTER TRY TO CROSS US!

AWW, KNOCK IT OFF, WILLYA? I DIDN'T BRING MY CRYIN' TOWEL WIT' ME TODAY!
CHEE, YOU'RE ALL AS YUCCHY AS EVER.

I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, BEN! MAYBE THAT'S WHAT MAKES US A TEAM!
WE'RE JUST A BUNCH OF YUCCHIES!
BUT NOTHING'LL EVER PART US AGAIN!

HEY, YA CAN'T BE THE FAN-TASTIC FOUR WIT' ONLY THREE HANDS!
I GUESS SOME-ONE'S GOTTA KEEP YA OUTTA TROUBLE!

THAT'S ALL VERY TOUCHING, BUT WE'RE STUCK ON A RAFT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN!
WHAT HAPPENS NOW?


ARE YOU KIDDIN'? AFTER WHAT WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, THIS IS A VACATION!
YEAH! WHO'S GOT TH' CARDS? I'M IN TH' MOOD FER SOME GIN RUMMY!
IT'S BEEN A GREAT 25 YEARS, FAITHFUL ONE! BUT WAIT'LL YOU SEE WHAT THE NEXT 25 HAS IN STORE FOR YOU!
EXCELSIOR!

I can't believe it!

Since Jolly Jack Kirby and I first bestowed the world's greatest super hero team upon a madly cheering, awesomely appreciative human race, I can't believe a quarter of a century has already sped by!

From where I sit, it doesn't seem like a day more than twenty-five years!

Y'know, never in my wildest flights of imagination did I dream that our quarrelsome and queasy little quartet would usher in a glorious new era for comicbooks. Never did I suspect that they'd actually live up to the title "The World's Greatest Comicbook" which I so frivolously added to the magazine's masthead in a burst of totally unwitting inspiration.

And now, the good ol' F.F. have become as much a part of Americana as that inspiring battle cry, "Make Mine Marvel!"

Who among us has not nurtured a secret desire to see Reed Richards stretch further than he's able? Who has not been tempted to shout "It's Clobberin' Time!" when nobody was looking? Who wouldn't love to have a fire extinguisher near at hand the next time Johnny Storm shouts "Flame On"? And what red-blooded American youth hasn't wished that he had met the stunning Invisible Girl before ol' Stretcho latched onto her?—And when she was still visible, natch!

Hey, I could go on, but I might get exiled to Yancy Street for corniness!

Anyway, I guess no single comicbook title has ever introduced more memorable characters or situations. Want proof? Try Galactus and the Silver Surfer! Or how about Doc Doom and his Latverian kingdom? And the Inhumans—not exactly chicken fat, huh? And leave us not forget The Black Panther, Wyatt Wingfoot, The Frightful Four, the Mole Man, the Fantasti-Car, The Baxter Building, and our all-time biggest triumph, that celebrated, charismatic couple, Aunt Petunia and Willie Lumpkin! Wow, I get all gushy and misty-eyed just thinking about 'em.

Now, here we are, twenty-five years later, having come full circle as our fabulous foursome once again battles the Mole Man, the first villain they ever tackled as a team! And I'm lucky enough to have been asked to script this landmark issue by that sentimental editor in chief, that peerless plotter and fellow scrivener, ol' High-Pockets Jim Shooter himself.

I loved writing it. I hope you'll love reading it. If you do, I humbly share and accept your plaudits and accolades. But if you don't, blame it on Jim! He could'a hired Irving Forbush!

And hey, better mark your calendar now before you forget. I'll be looking for you at our next big anniversary—the 50th!

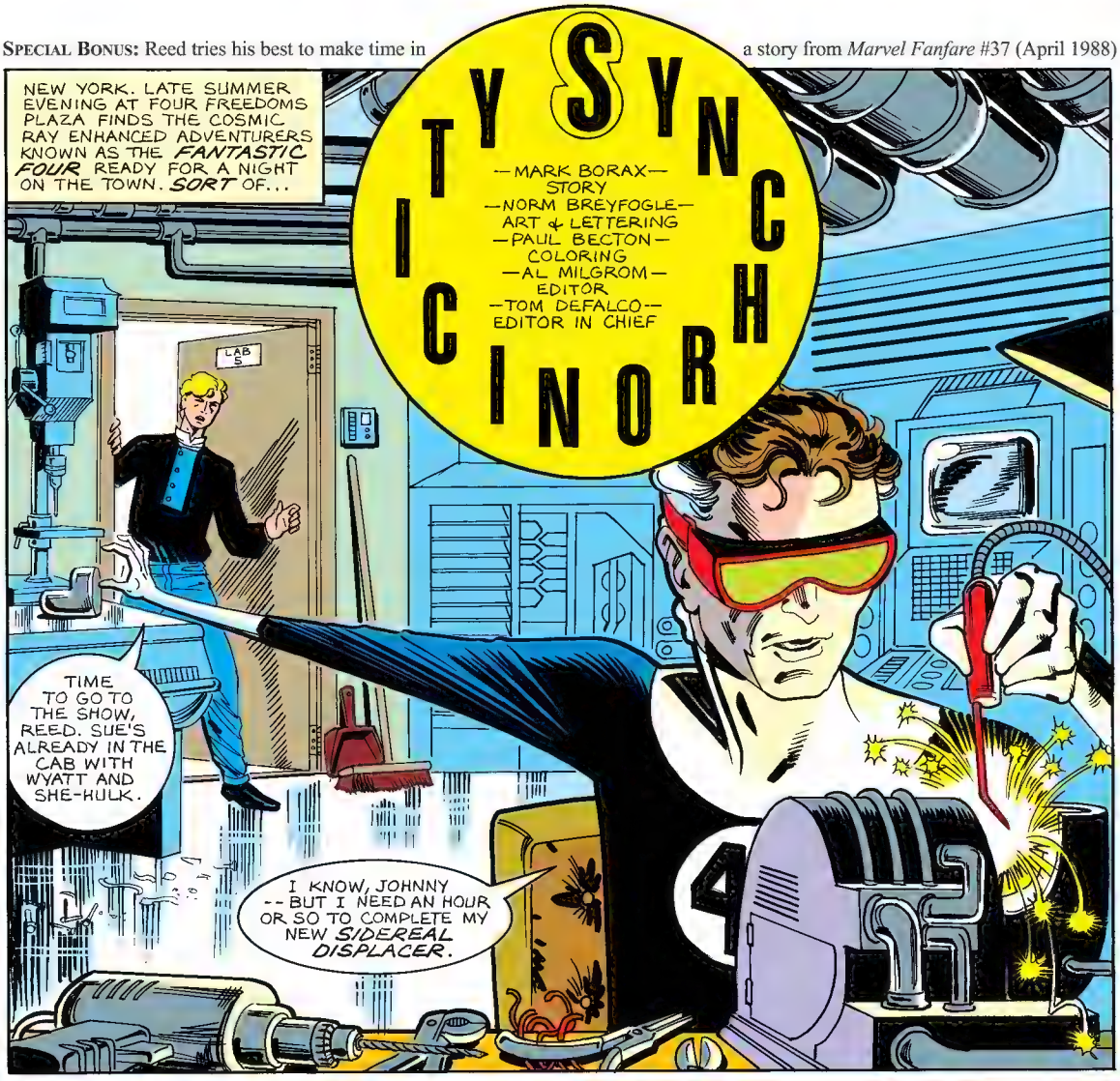
Excelsior!

Nearly two and a half decades after reading *Fantastic Four #1* I was asked to write the plot for this, the Silver Anniversary issue of the *Fantastic Four.* Writing it, I felt the same sort of joyous thrill as I did while reading issue #1. I experienced that electric excitement yet *again* while reading the absolutely awesome script written for this issue, by of course, Stan himself.

That feeling of sheer joy made me glad to be a part of Marvel Comics all three times. It made me realize just how great a responsibility I have, as editor in chief, to safeguard and carry on the legends that mean so much to so many of us. I could ramble on about that, but if Ben Grimm were here, he'd probably tell me what he once told Reed Richards way back when: "You don't have to make a speech, big shot! We understand!"

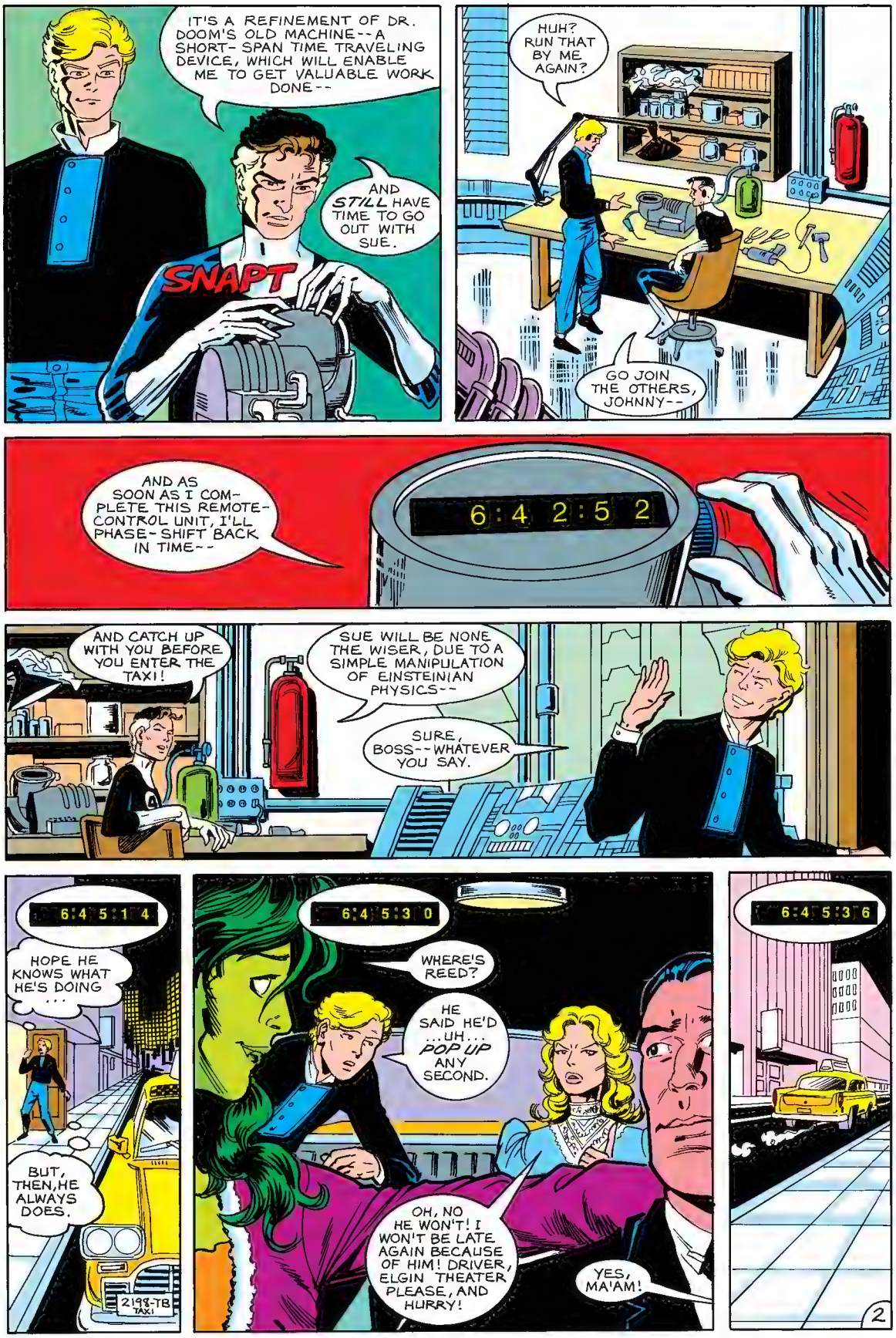
I hope so. But if you don't, I think you will soon—sixty-four pages from now to be exact.

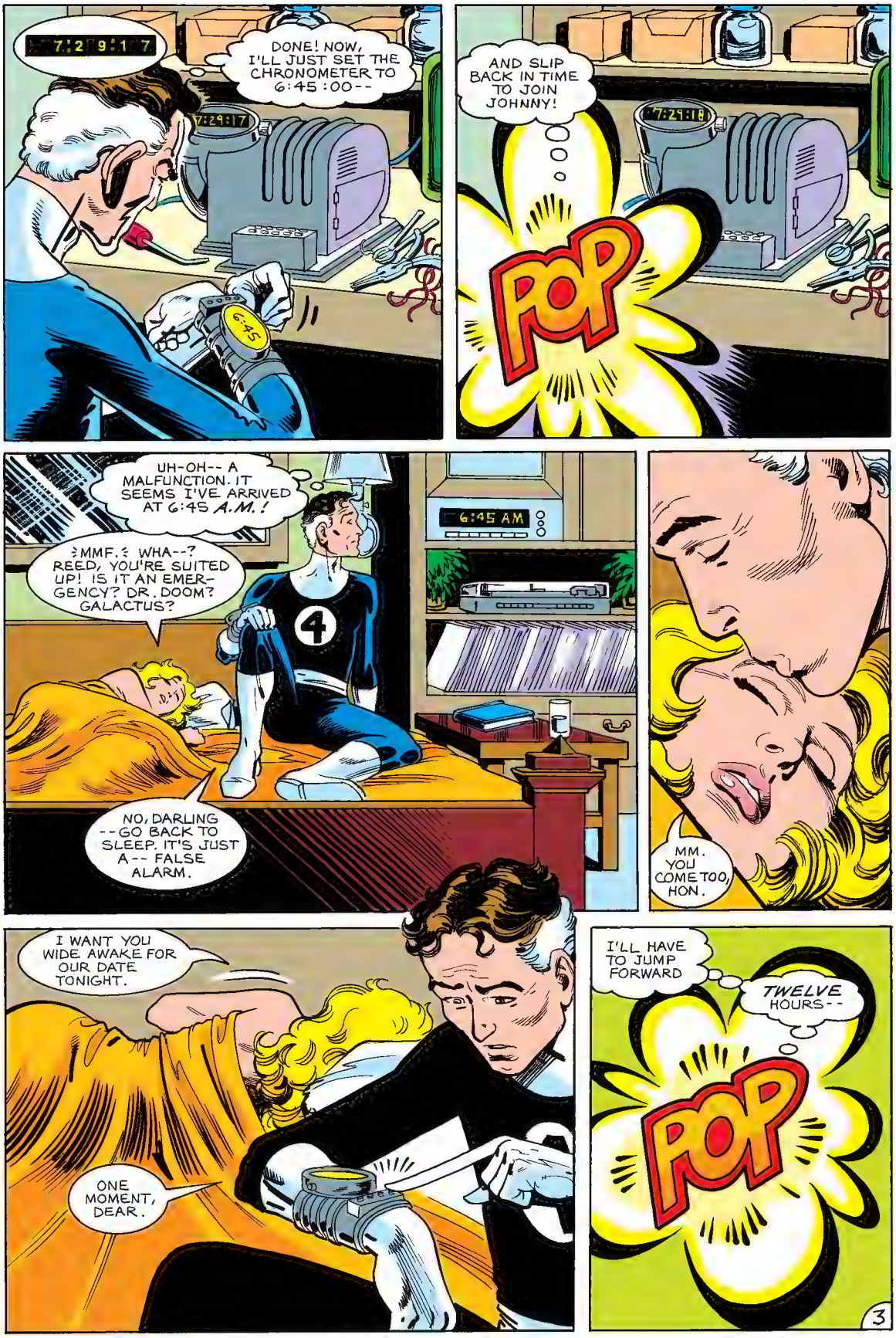
Jim Shooter
Editor in Chief


NEW YORK. LATE SUMMER EVENING AT FOUR FREEDOMS PLAZA FINDS THE COSMIC RAY ENHANCED ADVENTURERS KNOWN AS THE FANTASTIC FOUR READY FOR A NIGHT ON THE TOWN. SORT OF...
TY SYNC ICINOR CH
--MARK BORAX-- STORY
--NORM BREYFOGLE-- ART & LETTERING
--PAUL BECTON-- COLORING
--AL MILGROM-- EDITOR
--TOM DEFALCO-- EDITOR IN CHIEF
LAB
TIME TO GO TO THE SHOW, REED. SUE'S ALREADY IN THE CAB WITH WYATT AND SHE-HULK.
I KNOW, JOHNNY -- BUT I NEED AN HOUR OR SO TO COMPLETE MY NEW SIDEREAL DISPLACER.

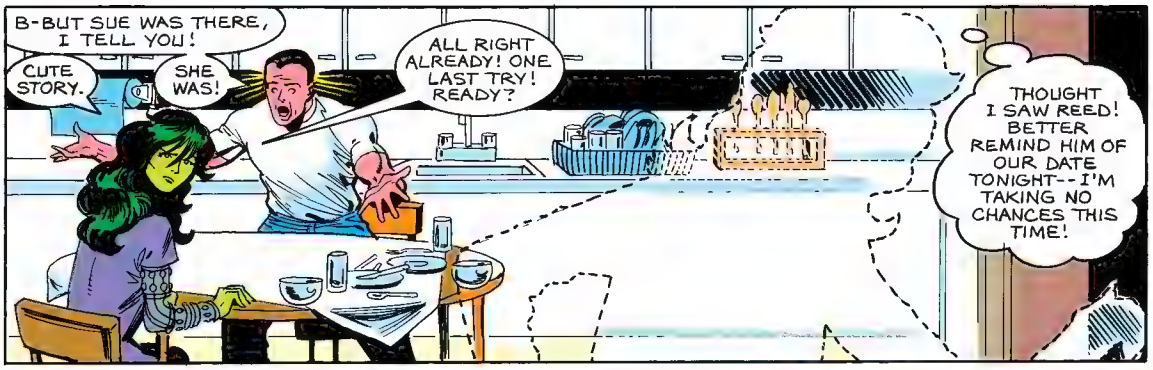
WHOA! IF YOU BLOW ONE MORE DATE WITH MY SISTER ON ACCOUNT OF YOUR WORK, SHE'S GONNA DISPLACE YOU-- PERMANENTLY!
YOU KNOW HOW MUCH SHE WANTS TO SEE THIS SPECIAL BENEFIT PREMIERE.

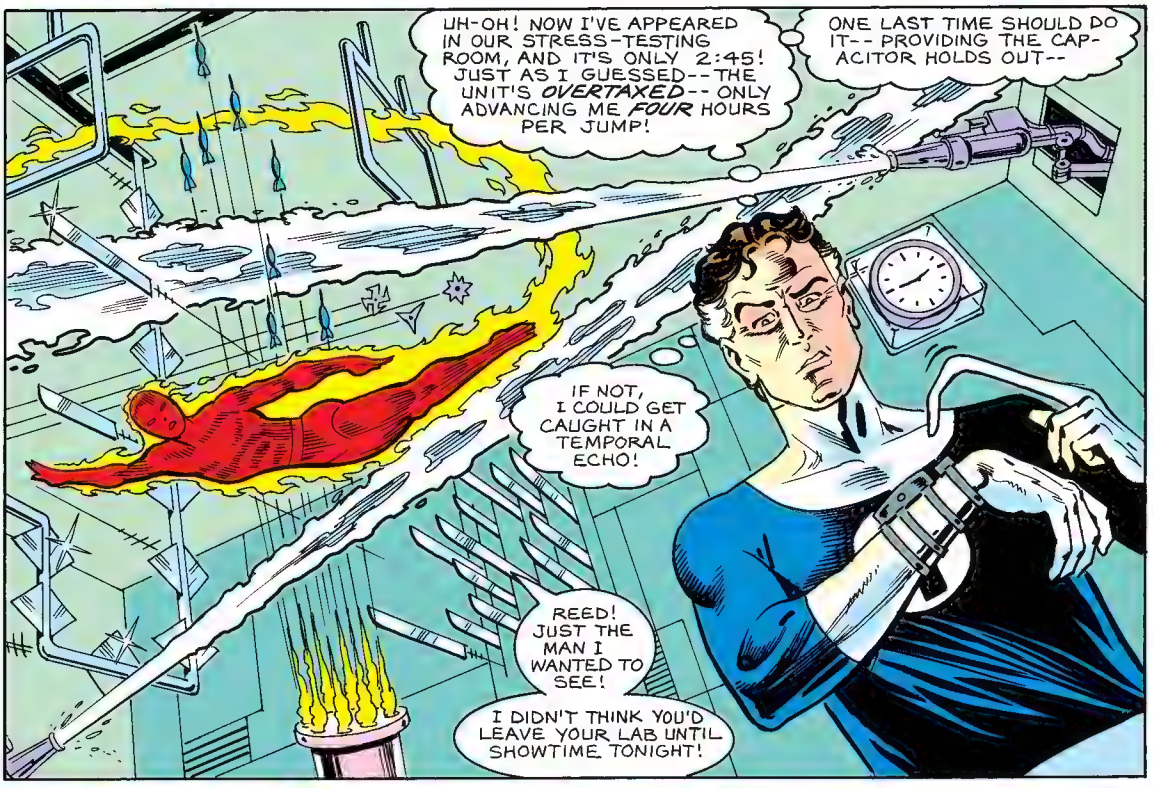
I'M WELL AWARE OF MY OWN WIFE'S FEELINGS, SON-- IN FACT, THAT'S WHY I'M RACING TO COMPLETE THE DISPLACER--


IT'S A REFINEMENT OF DR. DOOM'S OLD MACHINE--A SHORT-SPAN TIME TRAVELING DEVICE, WHICH WILL ENABLE ME TO GET VALUABLE WORK DONE--
AND STILL HAVE TIME TO GO OUT WITH SUE.
SNAPT
HUH? RUN THAT BY ME AGAIN?
GO JOIN THE OTHERS, JOHNNY--
AND AS SOON AS I COMPLETE THIS REMOTE-CONTROL UNIT, I'LL PHASE-SHIFT BACK IN TIME--
6:42:52
AND CATCH UP WITH YOU BEFORE YOU ENTER THE TAXI!
SUE WILL BE NONE THE WISER, DUE TO A SIMPLE MANIPULATION OF EINSTEINIAN PHYSICS--
SURE, BOSS--WHATEVER YOU SAY.
6:45:14
HOPE HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING ...
BUT, THEN, HE ALWAYS DOES.
2198-TB TAXI
6:45:30
WHERE'S REED?
HE SAID HE'D ...UH... POP UP ANY SECOND.
OH, NO HE WON'T! I WON'T BE LATE AGAIN BECAUSE OF HIM! DRIVER, ELGIN THEATER PLEASE, AND HURRY!
YES, MA'AM!
6:45:36
2

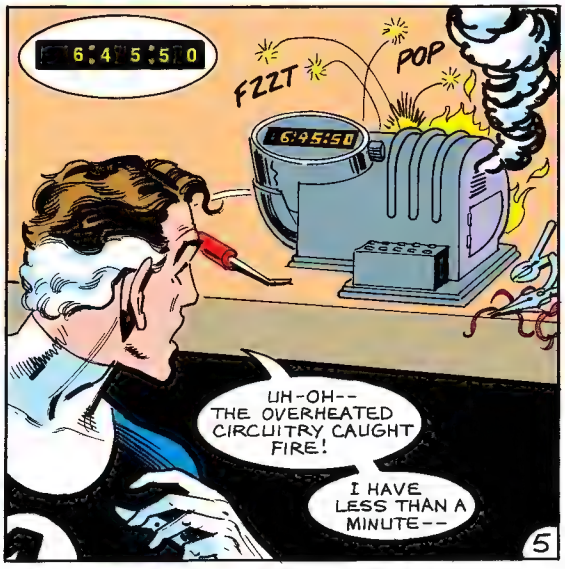

7:29:17
DONE! NOW, I'LL JUST SET THE CHRONOMETER TO 6:45 :00--
7:29:17
6:45
AND SLIP BACK IN TIME TO JOIN JOHNNY!
7:29:18
POP
UH-OH-- A MALFUNCTION. IT SEEMS I'VE ARRIVED AT 6:45 A.M.!
6:45 AM
4
:MMF.: WHA--? REED, YOU'RE SUITED UP! IS IT AN EMERGENCY? DR. DOOM? GALACTUS?
NO, DARLING --GO BACK TO SLEEP. IT'S JUST A-- FALSE ALARM.
MM. YOU COME TOO, HON.
I WANT YOU WIDE AWAKE FOR OUR DATE TONIGHT.
ONE MOMENT, DEAR.
I'LL HAVE TO JUMP FORWARD
TWELVE HOURS--
POP
3

ONLY FOUR HOURS LATER...
WITHOUT THIS ARMBAND NEUTRALIZER ≥HFF≤ THAT REED WHIPPED UP ≥MMH≤ YOU'D BE MARSHMELLOW MEAT, BIG BOY. ANY TIME YOU'RE READY.
GRRRR
WHAZZAT? YOU MEAN YOU ALREADY STARTED? YOU'LL NEED ≥MPH≤ MORE ELBOW GREASE-- IF YOU WANT ME ≥UGH≤ --
--TO BUY THE POPCORN--
--AT TONIGHT'S SHOW--
REED!
POP
GOTCHA, GREENIE!
SLAM
OH, NO! ONLY 10:45-- I'LL HAVE TO JUMP AGAIN!
I HOPE THESE EXTRA JUMPS DON'T DISRUPT THE TIME STREAM!
POP
AH-HAH! NO ONE'S THERE! UNLESS REED CAN TURN INVISIBLE LIKE SUE, NOW!
NO FAIR-- I TELL YOU REED WAS THERE A SECOND AGO--
--HONEST!
OKAY, OKAY, DON'T FLASH THOSE BABY GREENS! WE'LL TRY AGAIN.
GET YOUR POPCORN MONEY READY, HONEY--
YA CAN'T OUT INJUN-WRESTLE AN OLD INJUN, Y'KNO--
SUE!
NICE TRY, "GRAMPS" --BUT NO DICE. I'LL TAKE MINE BUTTERED.
SLAM
4

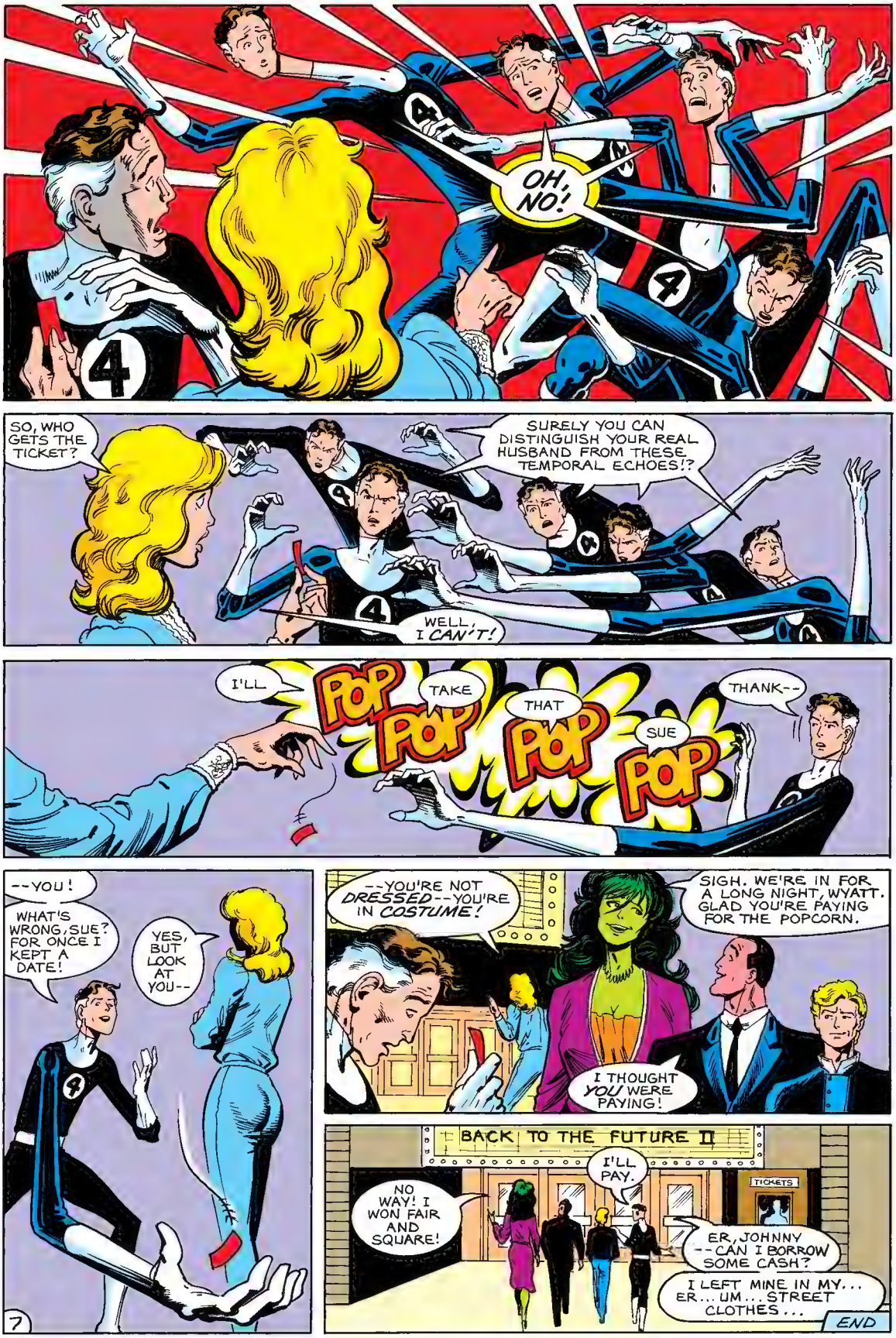

B-BUT SUE WAS THERE, I TELL YOU!
CUTE STORY.
SHE WAS!
ALL RIGHT ALREADY! ONE LAST TRY! READY?
THOUGHT I SAW REED! BETTER REMIND HIM OF OUR DATE TONIGHT--I'M TAKING NO CHANCES THIS TIME!


UH-OH! NOW I'VE APPEARED IN OUR STRESS-TESTING ROOM, AND IT'S ONLY 2:45! JUST AS I GUESSED--THE UNIT'S OVERTAXED--ONLY ADVANCING ME FOUR HOURS PER JUMP!
ONE LAST TIME SHOULD DO IT--PROVIDING THE CAPACITOR HOLDS OUT--
IF NOT, I COULD GET CAUGHT IN A TEMPORAL ECHO!
REED! JUST THE MAN I WANTED TO SEE!
I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D LEAVE YOUR LAB UNTIL SHOWTIME TONIGHT!

SUE ASKED ME TO REMIND YOU--
HUH? WHERE'D HE GO?
POP

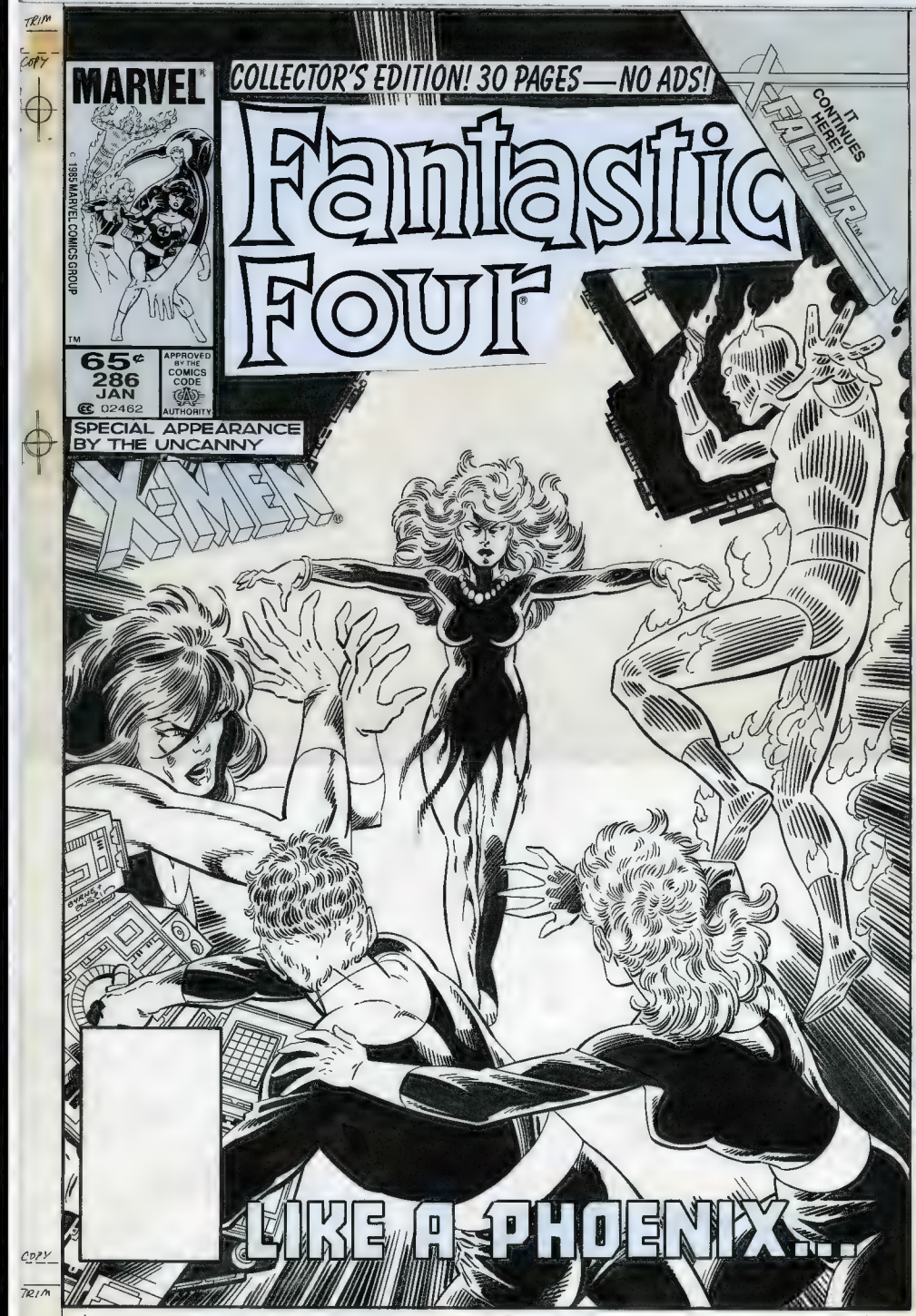

6:45:50
FZZT
POP
6:45:50
UH-OH--THE OVERHEATED CIRCUITRY CAUGHT FIRE!
I HAVE LESS THAN A MINUTE--
5

6:4 5:3 2
" --TO EXTINGUISH THE BLAZE--"
6:4 5:3 6
"BEFORE THEY LEAVE WITH-OUT ME."
6:5 5:2 2
FSSSSSS
DONE-- BUT I'M TOO LATE! I'LL HAVE TO RESORT --
--TO LESS CONVENTIONAL TRANSPORT.
WHEW-- JUST IN TIME TO OPEN SUE'S DOOR!
LUNGBLASTER CIGARETTES
WHY, THANK Y--
TICKETS
COMING SOON
OH. IT'S YOU.
B-BUT DARLING-- I MADE IT ON TIME!
LUNGBLASTER CIGARETTES
3723
YES, BUT WE ONLY HAVE A TICKET FOR ONE OF YOU.
HUH?
OH, NO!
6


OH, NO!
SO, WHO GETS THE TICKET?
SURELY YOU CAN DISTINGUISH YOUR REAL HUSBAND FROM THESE TEMPORAL ECHOES!?
WELL, I CAN'T!
I'LL
POP
TAKE
POP
POP
THAT
POP
SUE
POP
THANK--
--YOU!
WHAT'S WRONG, SUE? FOR ONCE I KEPT A DATE!
YES, BUT LOOK AT YOU--
7
--YOU'RE NOT DRESSED--YOU'RE IN COSTUME!
SIGH. WE'RE IN FOR A LONG NIGHT, WYATT. GLAD YOU'RE PAYING FOR THE POPCORN.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE PAYING!
BACK TO THE FUTURE II
I'LL PAY.
TICKETS
NO WAY! I WON FAIR AND SQUARE!
ER, JOHNNY --CAN I BORROW SOME CASH?
I LEFT MINE IN MY... ER... UM... STREET CLOTHES...
END

'87

The Fantastic Four #286 cover original art
by John Byrne & Terry Austin

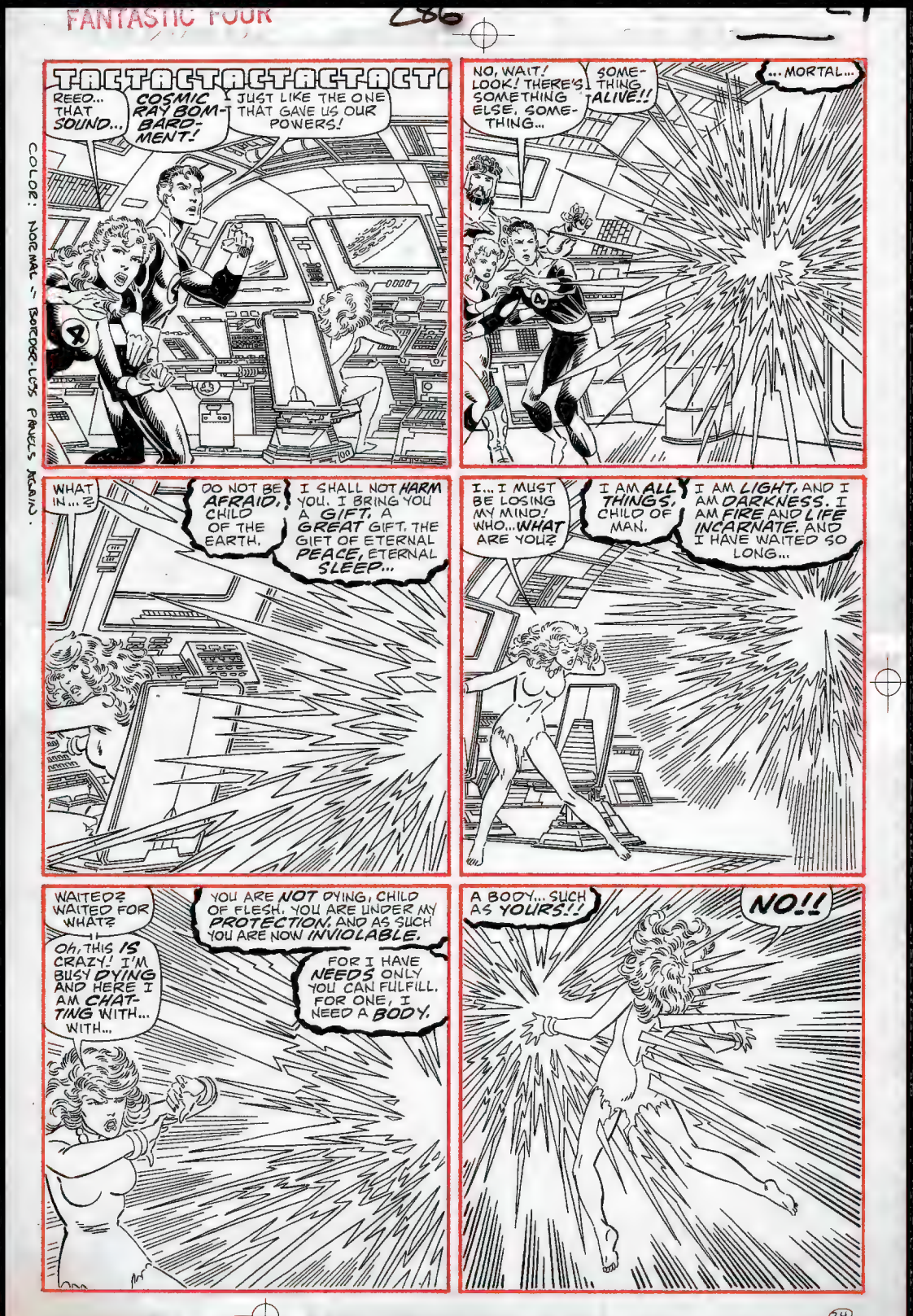


TITLE: THE FANTASTIC FOUR
NO: ~~283~~ 286
MONTH: ~~DECEMBER~~ JAN.

SCHEDULE: ~~AUGUST~~ SEPT.
ARTIST: BYRNE/AUSTIN

Courtesy Scott Dunbier

Editor-in-chief Jim Shooter requested changes to John Byrne's *FF* #286 sequence depicting Jean Grey's encounter with the Phoenix. The script alterations were tasked to


FANTASTIC FOUR
286
TACTACTACTACTACT!
REED... THAT SOUND...
COSMIC RAY BOM-BARD-MENT!
I JUST LIKE THE ONE THAT GAVE US OUR POWERS!
NO, WAIT! LOOK! THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE, SOME-THING...
SOME-THING ALIVE!!
...MORTAL...
COLOR: NORMAL + BORDER-LESS PANELS AGAIN.
WHAT IN... ?
DO NOT BE AFRAID, CHILD OF THE EARTH.
I SHALL NOT HARM YOU. I BRING YOU A GIFT. A GREAT GIFT. THE GIFT OF ETERNAL PEACE, ETERNAL SLEEP...
I... I MUST BE LOSING MY MIND! WHO... WHAT ARE YOU?
I AM ALL THINGS, CHILD OF MAN.
I AM LIGHT, AND I AM DARKNESS. I AM FIRE AND LIFE INCARNATE. AND I HAVE WAITED SO LONG...
WAITED? WAITED FOR WHAT?
OH, THIS IS CRAZY! I'M BUSY DYING AND HERE I AM CHAT-TING WITH... WITH...
YOU ARE NOT DYING, CHILD OF FLESH. YOU ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION. AND AS SUCH YOU ARE NOW INVIOLABLE.
FOR I HAVE NEEDS ONLY YOU CAN FULFILL. FOR ONE, I NEED A BODY.
A BODY... SUCH AS YOURS!!
NO!!
24

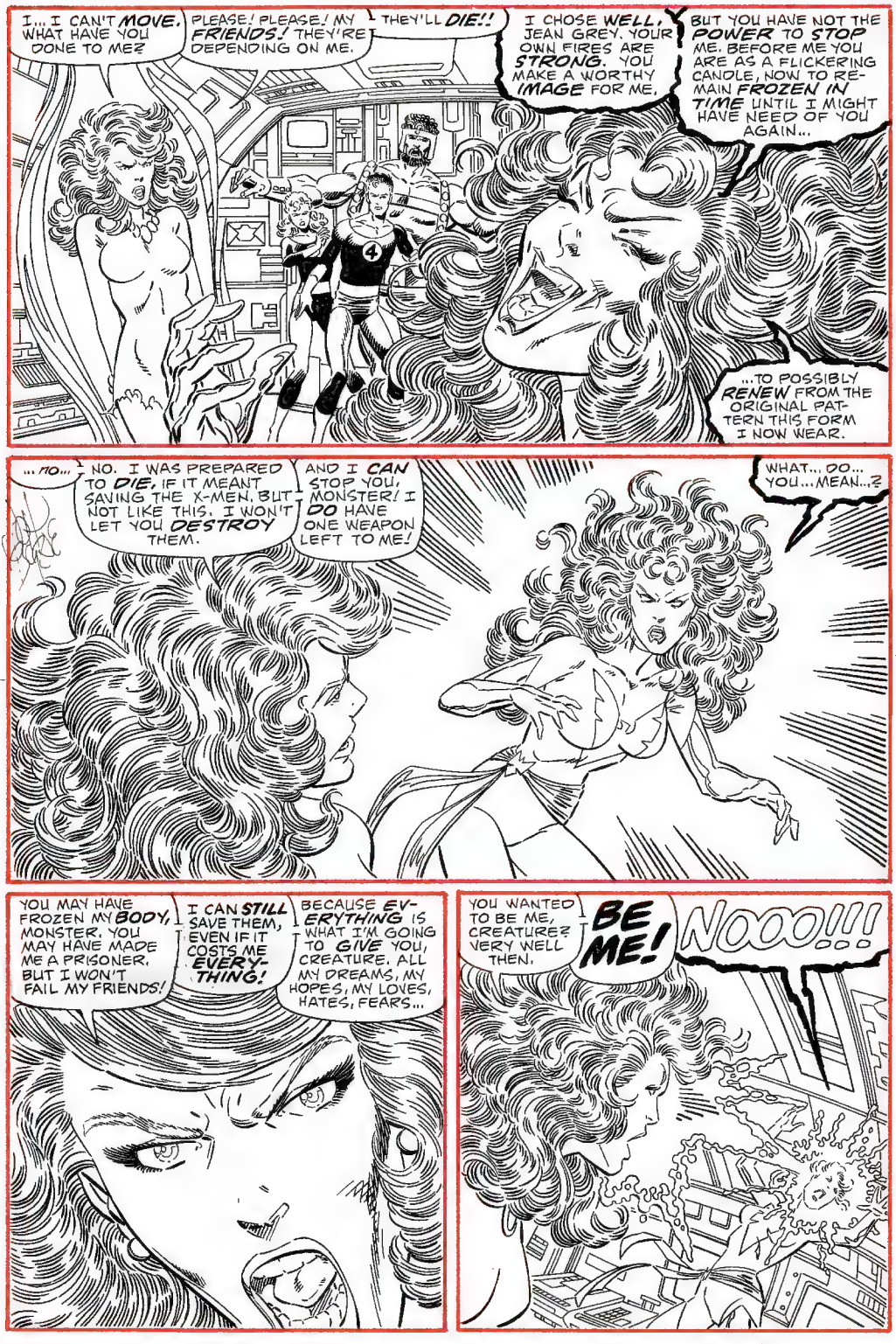
Courtesy Brian Peck

writer Chris Claremont while Butch Guice drew new panels for parts of pages 24-25 as well as a completely new page 26. Unaltered, original pages 24 (facing) and 25 (below).

FANTASTIC FOUR
286
JEAN!!
EASY, SUE, EASY! THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO!
REMEMBER, THIS IS NOT REAL--AT LEAST NOT TO US. THIS IS LIVING MEMORY!
'TIS LIVING TRAGEDY, METHINKS!
BUT...WHY HATH THE WORLD GROWN STILL ABOUT US?
TIME WARP!
THAT ENTITY HAS FROZEN TIME AROUND US WHILE IT DOES... WHAT IT'S DOING.
BUT... WHAT IS IT DOING ???
COLOR ~ NORMAL = BORDERLESS PANELS RATHER
THIS CELLULAR FORM IS CLOSE TO MY NEEDS, FEMALE. BUT TOO WEAK, TOO FRAGILE TO CONTAIN MY FIRES.
BUT IT IS SUITABLE AS A MATRIX, A PATTERN FROM WHICH I CAN STRUCTURE A VESSEL MORE PERFECT.
CELL-FOR-CELL I MATCH YOU, HUMAN. CELL-FOR-CELL I RE-CREATE YOU.
BUT NOT AS A PERISHABLE THING OF FLESH AND BLOOD, A CREATURE OF LIVING POWER IS WHAT WE SHALL BECOME.
NO! NO! GET OUT OF ME!! GET OUT OF MY MIND!!
DO NOT FIGHT ME, JEAN GREY. YOU ARE BEING REBORN! GLORY IN THE POWER, FOR YOU SHALL NOT SHARE IT LONG!
I TAKE FROM YOU THE ESSENCE OF YOUR BEING, JEAN GREY.
I TAKE FROM YOU THE SHAPE, THE KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY TO WALK AMONG MEN UNNOTICED, UNMOLESTED, TO DRINK FULLY FROM THE CUP OF LIFE!
25

Courtesy Terry Austin

The Fantastic Four #286 unused page 26 original art
by John Byrne & Terry Austin


FANTASTIC FOUR
C06
I... I CAN'T MOVE. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?
PLEASE! PLEASE! MY FRIENDS! THEY'RE DEPENDING ON ME.
THEY'LL DIE!!
I CHOSE WELL, JEAN GREY. YOUR OWN FIRES ARE STRONG. YOU MAKE A WORTHY IMAGE FOR ME.
BUT YOU HAVE NOT THE POWER TO STOP ME. BEFORE ME YOU ARE AS A FLICKERING CANDLE, NOW TO REMAIN FROZEN IN TIME UNTIL I MIGHT HAVE NEED OF YOU AGAIN...
...TO POSSIBLY RENEW FROM THE ORIGINAL PATTERN THIS FORM I NOW WEAR.
...no...
NO. I WAS PREPARED TO DIE, IF IT MEANT SAVING THE X-MEN. BUT NOT LIKE THIS. I WON'T LET YOU DESTROY THEM.
AND I CAN STOP YOU, MONSTER! I DO HAVE ONE WEAPON LEFT TO ME!
WHAT... DO... YOU... MEAN...?
YOU MAY HAVE FROZEN MY BODY, MONSTER. YOU MAY HAVE MADE ME A PRISONER. BUT I WON'T FAIL MY FRIENDS!
I CAN STILL SAVE THEM, EVEN IF IT COSTS ME EVERYTHING!
BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS WHAT I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU, CREATURE. ALL MY DREAMS, MY HOPES, MY LOVES, HATES, FEARS...
YOU WANTED TO BE ME, CREATURE? VERY WELL THEN.
BE ME!
NOOO!!!
26

Courtesy Brian Peck

The Fantastic Four #286 unaltered page 27 original art and script
by John Byrne & Terry Austin

FANTASTIC FOUR
YES!!!
I'M ME! I'M JEAN GREY!! AND I'M ALIVE!!!
JEAN!
Oh-h-h-h!
THE CRYSTAL!
THE POOR THING! SHE'S SHAKING LIKE A LEAF, DRENCHED IN SWEAT!
WHAT AN AWFUL EXPERIENCE TO HAVE SURVIVED!
IF SHE SURVIVED.
WHAT DOST THOU MEAN, REED RICHARDS?
YOU SAW IT ALL, TOO, HERCULES.
THAT ENERGY ENTITY DUPLICATED JEAN, TRIED TO BECOME HER.
THE QUESTION NOW CONFRONTING US IS: WHICH ONE OF THEM IS THIS?
OH, NO! PLEASE!

Courtesy Brian Peck

The Fantastic Four #286 unaltered page 28 original art and script
by John Byrne & Terry Austin

FANTASTIC FOUR
286
29
PART OF ME FEELS FINE! I HAVE... ALL MY OWN MEMORIES. ALL MY OWN...
HOPES? LOVES? YOU SEE THE PROBLEM, DON'T YOU?
THE ENERGY CREATURE WAS FORCED, BY JEAN'S TELEPATHIC BOLT, TO COMPLETELY BELIEVE ITSELF TO BE JEAN.
BUT... HOW CAN I EVER KNOW FOR SURE? HOW CAN I EVER KNOW I'M REALLY ME, AND NOT THAT... THAT THING?
I THINK I CAN ANSWER THAT.
I CAUGHT THE LAST FEW SECONDS OF THAT PSYCHIC MOVIOLA AS I WAS LANDING MY JET-CYCLE.
AN UN-NERVING EXPERIENCE.
BUT IT MATCHES VERY WELL WITH WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE BEASTS' REPORT IN THE AVENGERS' FILES.
THAT SHUTTLE OF YOURS DID CRASH IN JAMAICA BAY. AND IN WHAT MUST STAND AS A MAJOR MIRACLE, THERE WERE NO FATALITIES.
IN FACT, ONE PERSON SEEMED TO COME OUT OF THE WRECK EVEN BETTER THAN BEFORE.
JEAN GREY.
M... ME?
OR SOMETHING THAT THOUGHT IT WAS YOU. SOMETHING THAT TURNED OUT TO BE THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF PURE EVIL.
THE CREATURE!
EXACTLY. IT CALLED ITSELF PHOENIX, AND IT WAS WELL ON ITS WAY TO DESTROYING US ALL...
UNTIL JEAN DEFEATED IT.
ME?! HOW? I WAS STILL ZONKED OUT ON THE BOTTOM OF THE BAY...
WASN'T I?

Courtesy Brian Peck

The Fantastic Four #286 unaltered page 29 original art and script
by John Byrne & Terry Austin

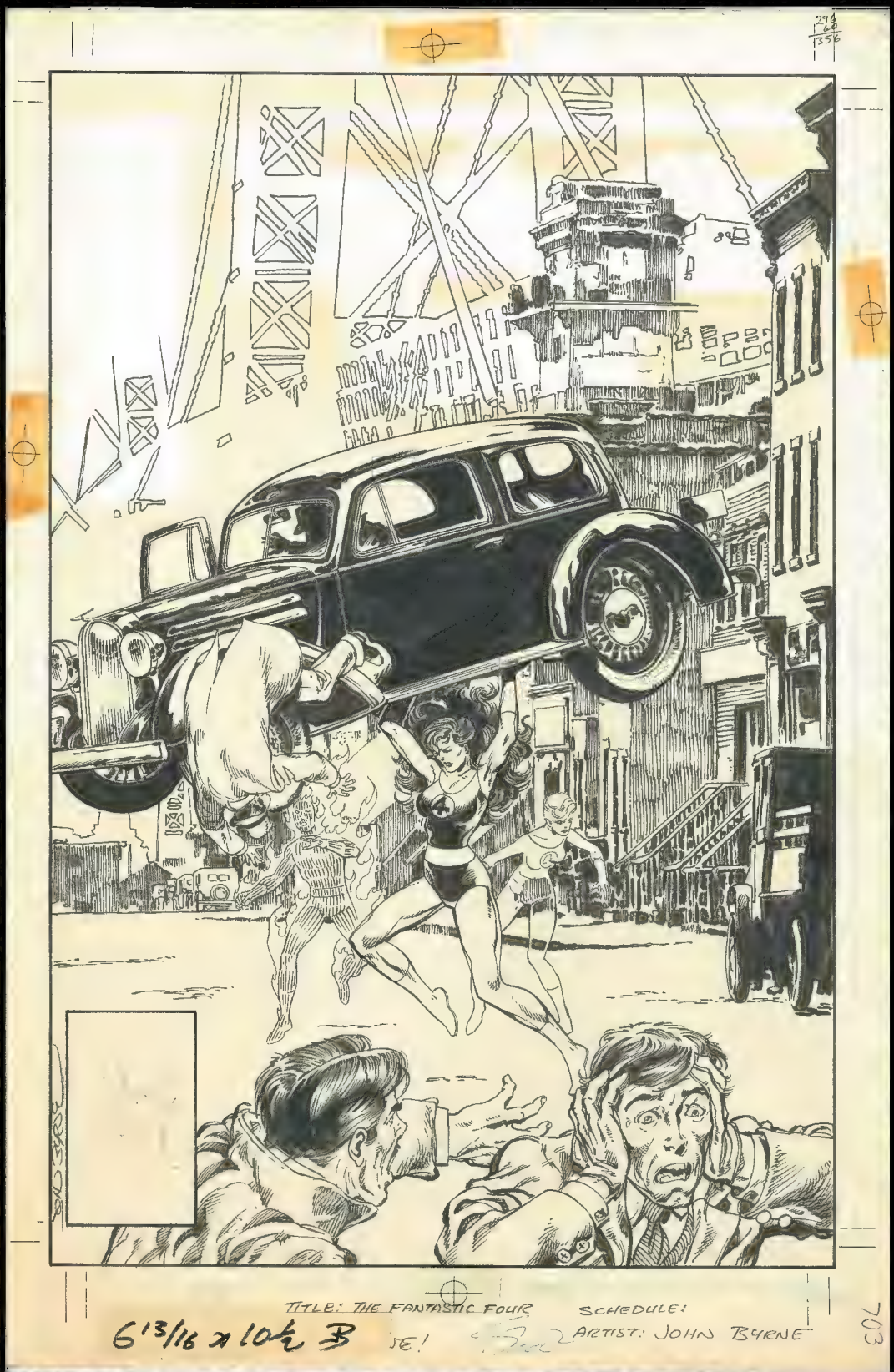
FANTASTIC FOUR
286
30
INDEED YOU WERE, JEAN. BUT I CAN SEE CAP'S POINT.
THAT LAST, DESPERATE EFFORT OF YOURS TO PREVENT THIS...PHOENIX FROM DESTROYING THE ONES YOU LOVED...
YOU MEAN... IT WORKED?
BETTER THAN YOU COULD POSSIBLY HAVE HOPED FOR, MISS GREY.
THE PHOENIX HAD DUPLICATED YOU DOWN TO THE LAST ATOM OF YOUR STRUCTURE.
IT HAD IMITATED THE PATTERNS OF YOUR BRAIN-WAVES SO PRECISELY THAT EVEN A TRAINED MIND-READER COULD NOT HAVE RECOGNIZED IT FOR WHAT IT WAS.
BUT YOU MADE IT DO MORE THAN THAT, JEAN. YOU MADE IT DUPLICATE YOUR INNER SELF.
YOU GAVE IT YOUR HUMANITY, JEAN.
YOU GAVE IT A SOUL.
AND, IN THE LAST MOMENTS, AS IT HOVERED BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS, UP THERE ON THE MOON, THAT'S WHAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE.
BECAUSE THERE'S NO FORCE IN THE UNIVERSE THAT CAN SUPPRESS THE SPLENDOR OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT. AND IT WAS THAT SPIRIT, EVEN IN DUPLICATE FORM, THAT WAS ENOUGH TO DEFEAT THE EVIL POWER OF THE PHOENIX.
29

Courtesy Brian Peck

The Fantastic Four #290 page 2 original art
by John Byrne & Al Gordon

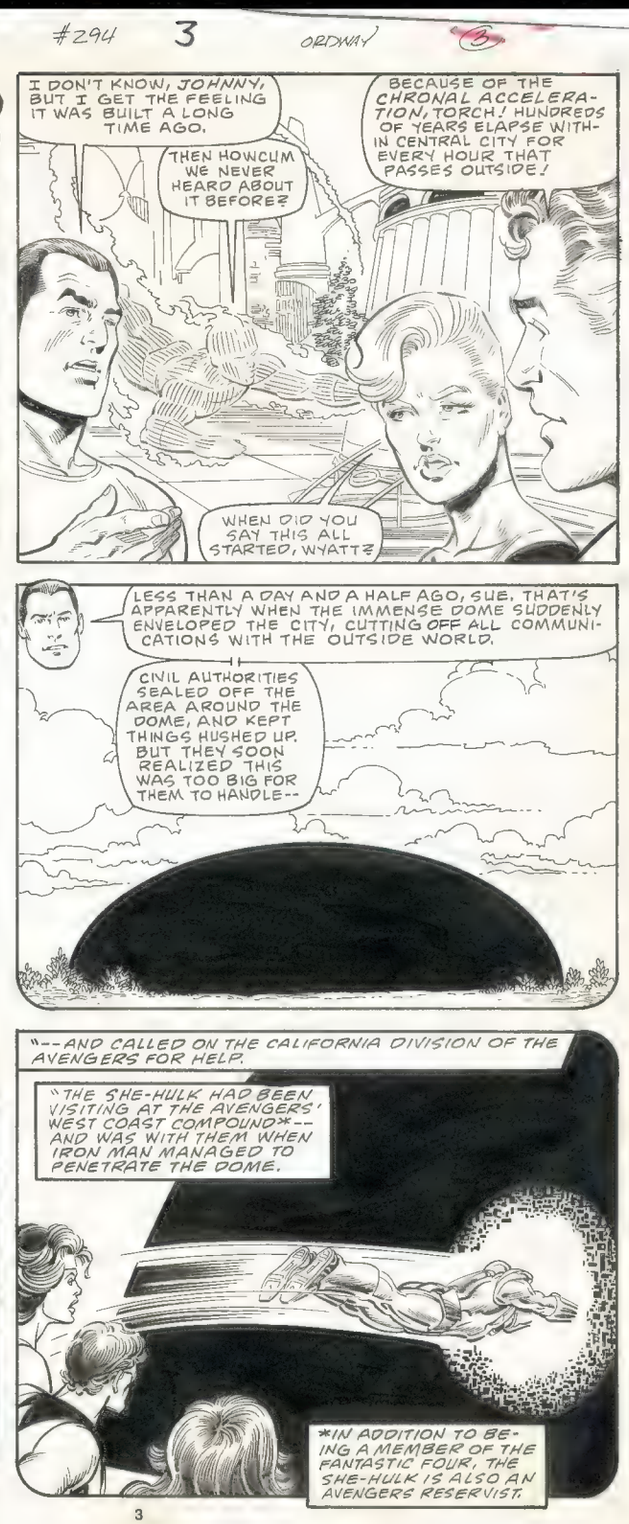
Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Fantastic Four #291 cover original art
by John Byrne



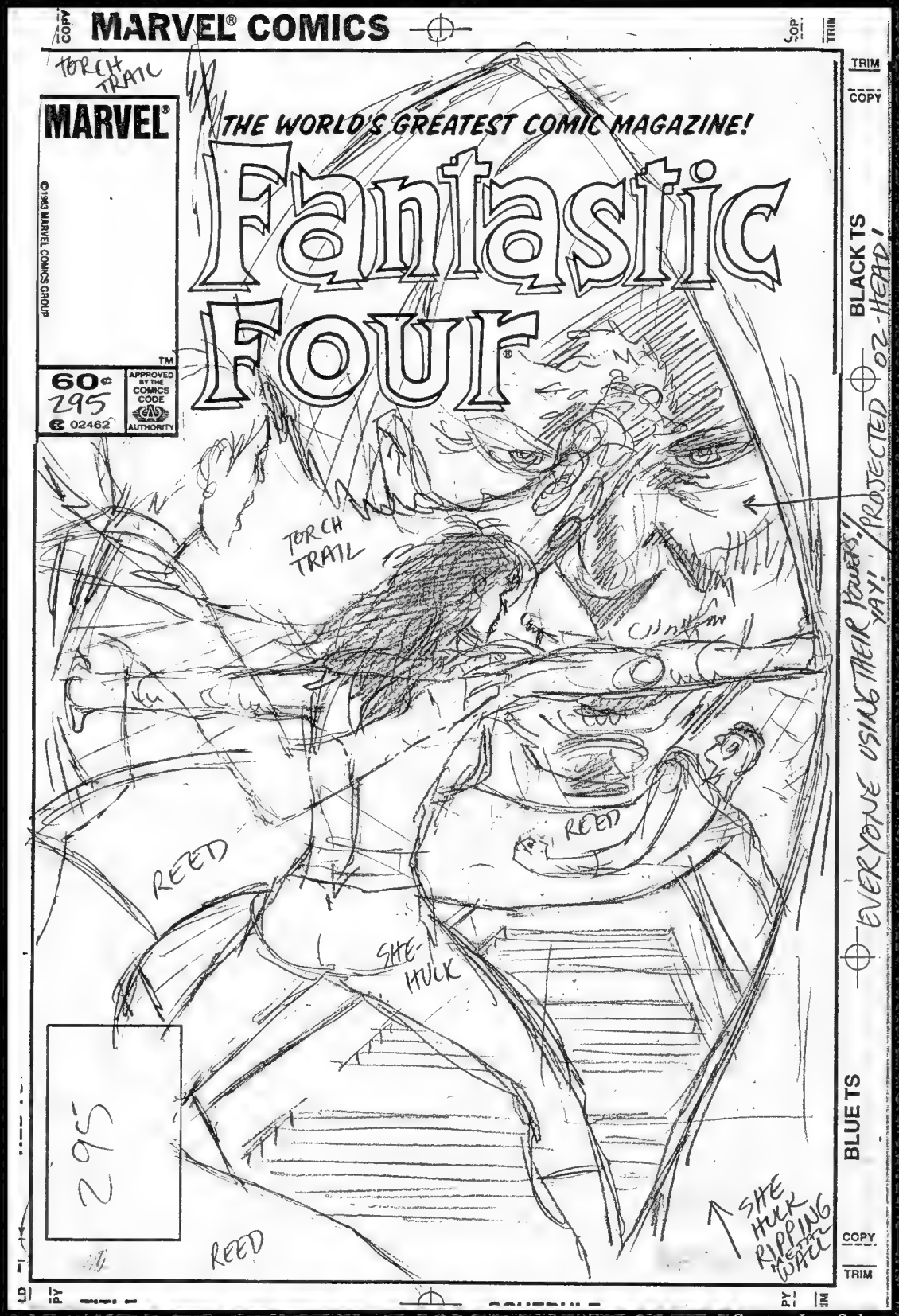
Courtesy Todd Maston

The Fantastic Four #294 pages 2-3 original art
by Jerry Ordway & Al Gordon


FANTASTIC FOUR #294 3 ORDWAY
I DON'T KNOW, JOHNNY, BUT I GET THE FEELING IT WAS BUILT A LONG TIME AGO.
THEN HOWCUM WE NEVER HEARD ABOUT IT BEFORE?
BECAUSE OF THE CHRONAL ACCELERATION, TORCH! HUNDREDS OF YEARS ELAPSE WITHIN CENTRAL CITY FOR EVERY HOUR THAT PASSES OUTSIDE!
WHEN DID YOU SAY THIS ALL STARTED, WYATT?
LESS THAN A DAY AND A HALF AGO, SUE. THAT'S APPARENTLY WHEN THE IMMENSE DOME SUDDENLY ENVELOPED THE CITY, CUTTING OFF ALL COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
CIVIL AUTHORITIES SEALED OFF THE AREA AROUND THE DOME, AND KEPT THINGS HUSHED UP. BUT THEY SOON REALIZED THIS WAS TOO BIG FOR THEM TO HANDLE--
"--AND CALLED ON THE CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF THE AVENGERS FOR HELP.
"THE SHE-HULK HAD BEEN VISITING AT THE AVENGERS' WEST COAST COMPOUND*--AND WAS WITH THEM WHEN IRON MAN MANAGED TO PENETRATE THE DOME.
*IN ADDITION TO BEING A MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR, THE SHE-HULK IS ALSO AN AVENGERS RESERVIST.
3

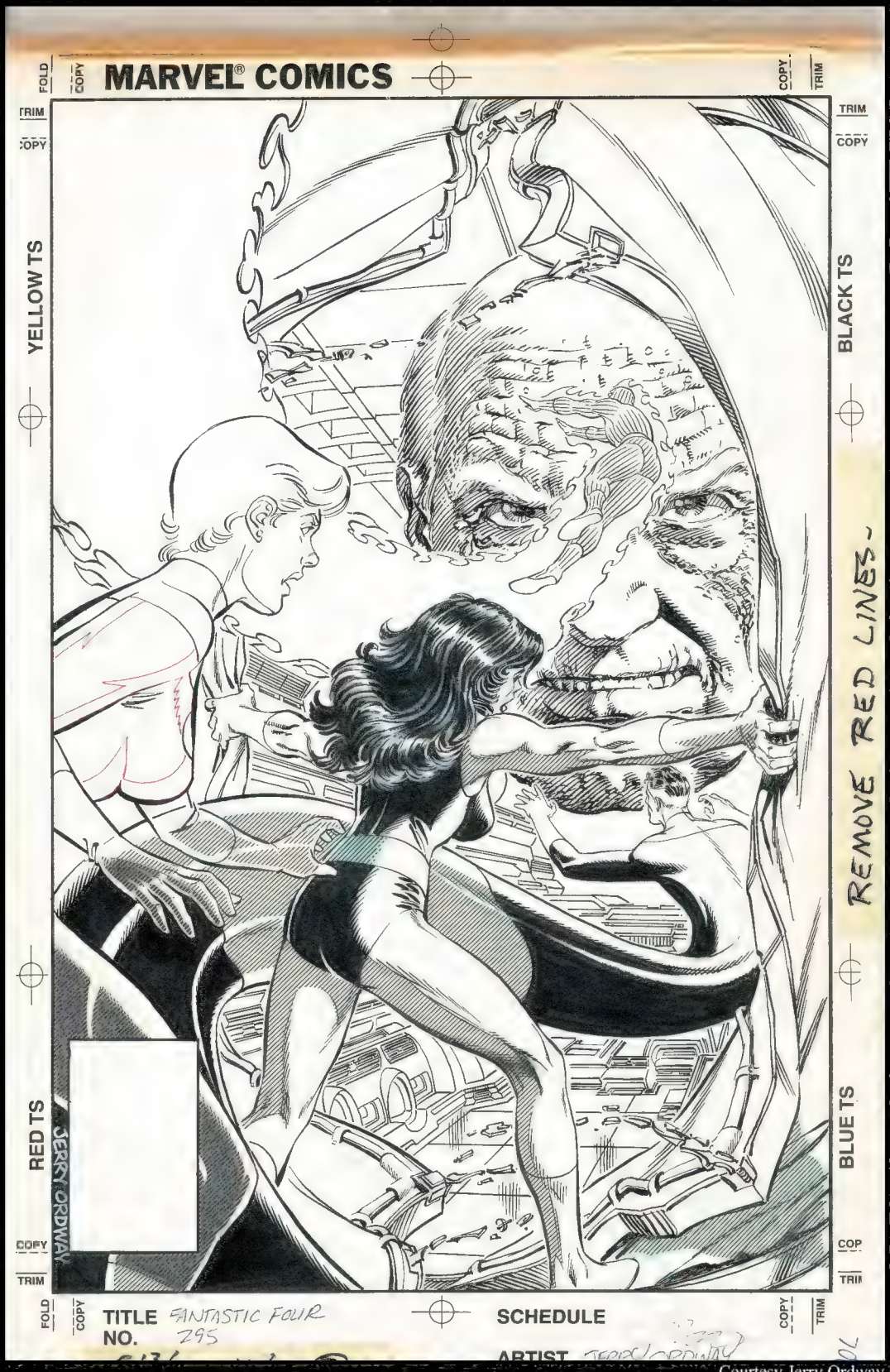
Courtesy Jerry Ordway

The Fantastic Four #295 cover sketch (photocopy)
attributed to Larry Hama



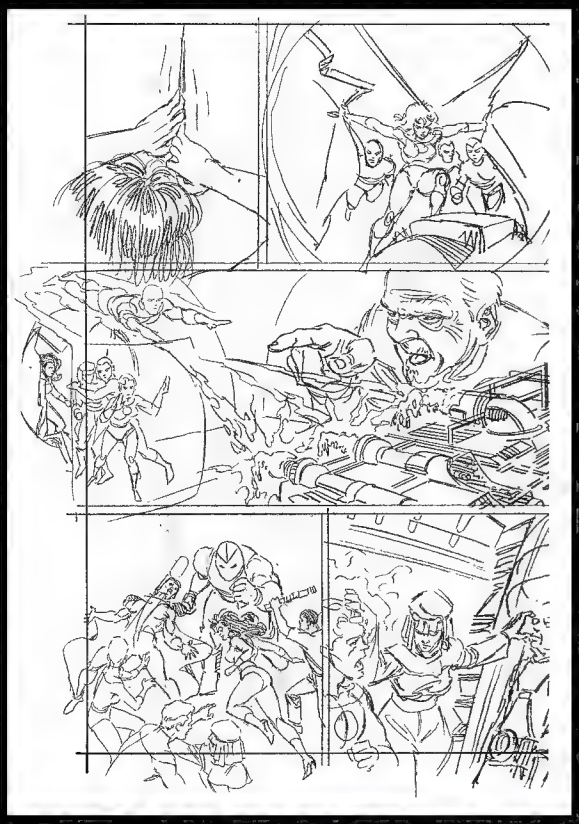
Courtesy Jerry Ordway

The Fantastic Four #296 cover original art
by Jerry Ordway



Courtesy Jerry Ordway

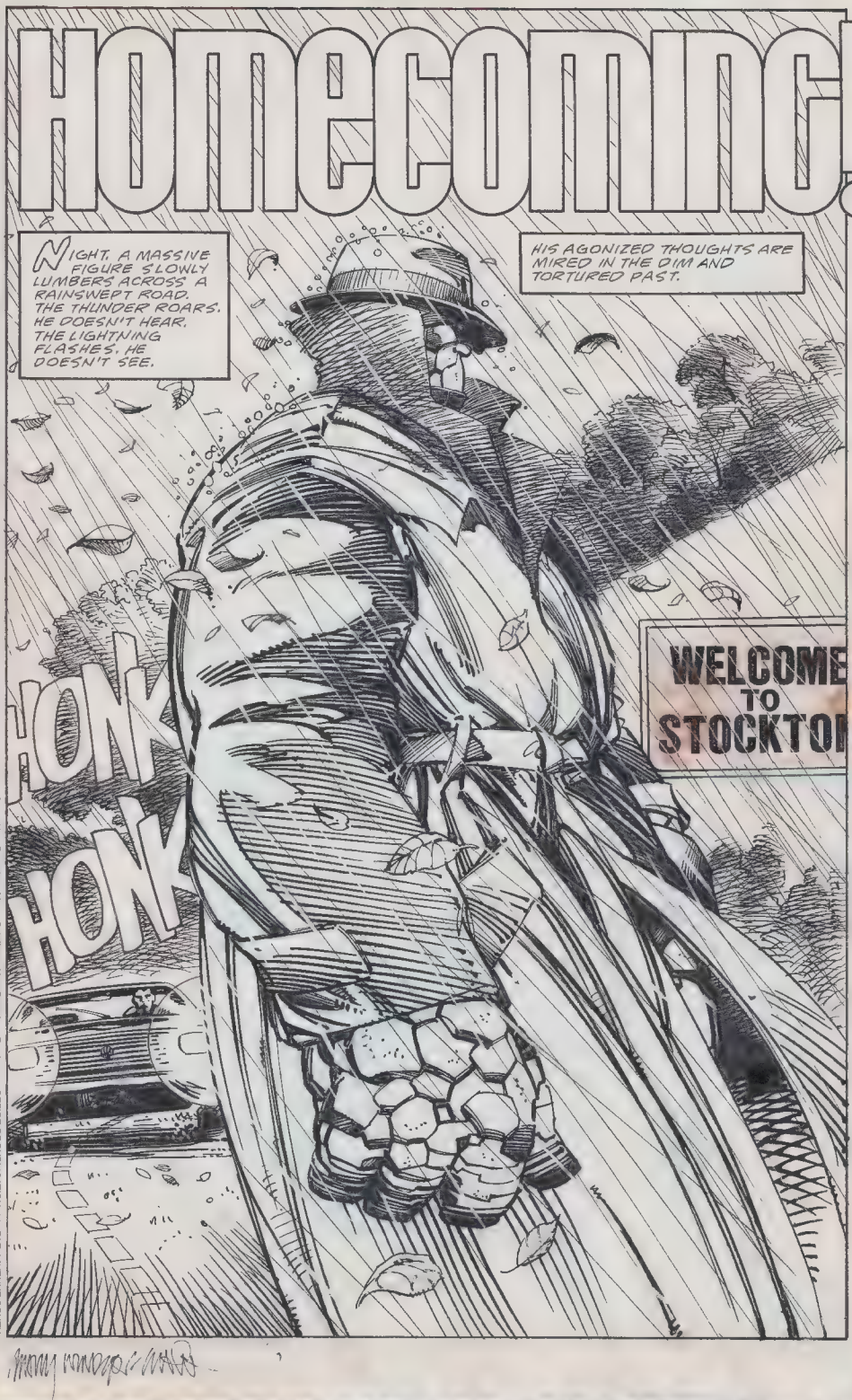
The Fantastic Four #295, page 16 layout and pencil art (photocopies) by Jerry Ordway (top) and final original art by Ordway & Al Gordon (bottom)



FANTASTIC FOUR
20
"IT'S THE DOOR? JUST LET ME GET A DECENT GRIP--"
CAREFUL, SHE HULK; JESSE HAS PLENTY OF WEAPONRY IN THERE!
JOHNNY YOU GO FIRST--I'LL COVER YOU.
WHOOPS. LOOKS LIKE I'VE BROKEN ALL THESE NIFTY TOYS! SORRY ABOUT THAT, YO GREAT AND POWERFUL OZ!"
STOP THEM, MY CHILDREN... SHOW THEM NO MERCY!
AT LEAST THEY'RE EASIER TO DEAL WITH IN HERE!
DON'T HOG ALL THE FUN, JESSE.
MURNA, CAN YOU TALK MY MOM TO THE COORDINATORS?
I CAN--BUT I COULD ENDANGER YOUR PSYCHE.
I'LL TAKE THAT CHANCE. HE MUST BE MADE TO SEE WHAT HE'S DONE!
JERRY NO...
16

Courtesy Jerry Ordway

The Fantastic Four #296, page 1 original art
by Barry Windsor-Smith


FANTASTIC FOUR
HOMECOMING!
NIGHT. A MASSIVE FIGURE SLOWLY LUMBERS ACROSS A RAINSWEPT ROAD. THE THUNDER ROARS. HE DOESN'T HEAR. THE LIGHTNING FLASHES. HE DOESN'T SEE.
HIS AGONIZED THOUGHTS ARE MIRED IN THE DIM AND TORTURED PAST.
HONK
HONK
WELCOME TO STOCKTO

FANTASTIC FOUR® Vol. 1, No. 296, November, 1986. (ISSN 0274-5291) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James F. Galton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Michael Hobson, Group Vice-President, Milton Schifman, Vice-President, Production. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016 **SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.** Published monthly. Copyright © 1986 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price $1.50 per copy in the U.S. and $1.75 Canada. Subscription rate $9.00 for 12 issues Canada and Foreign, $11.00. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or mask removed, nor in a mutilated condition. FANTASTIC FOUR, including all prominent characters featured in the issue, and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP. **POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO FANTASTIC FOUR, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, 10TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016.**

Courtesy Jeff Tamplin

The Fantastic Four #296, page 51 pencil art (photocopy)
by Jerry Ordway

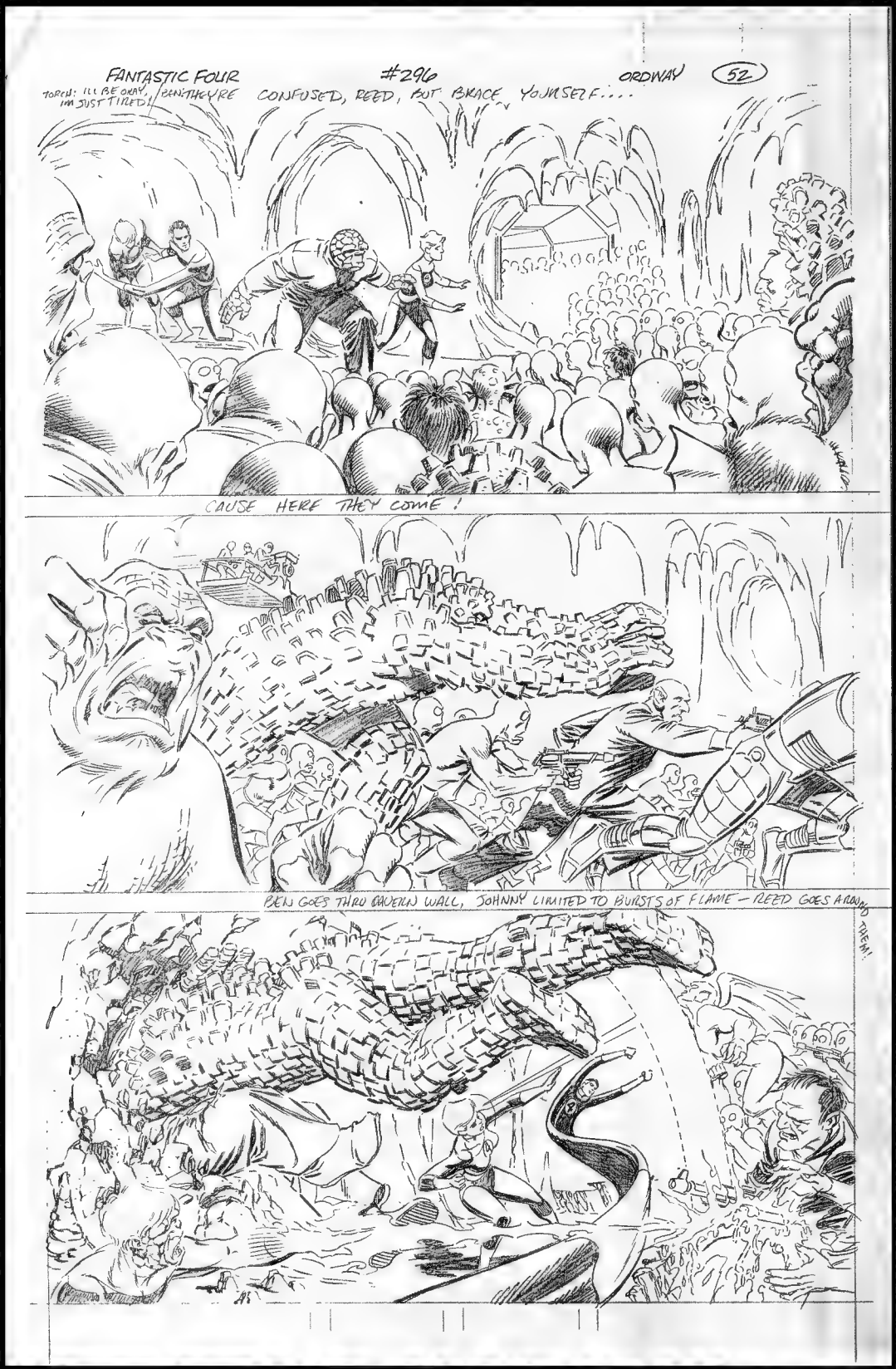
Courtesy Jerry Ordway

The Fantastic Four #296, page 51 original art by Jerry Ordway & Bob Wiacek (Note alterations to the published art to the Moloids throughout and to Reed's face in panel 3.)

FANTASTIC FOUR
#296
SO INTENT IS REED RICHARDS ON CONVINCING BEN, THAT HE DOESN'T SEE THE BLAST RAY AIMED AT HIM UNTIL TOO LATE...
UNNNNHH
HEY, GIMME THAT POPGUN, YA CREEP!
IF ANYONE'S GONNA CLOBBER THAT STRETCHED-OUT STRINGBEAN, IT'LL BE ME!
THANKS, BEN.
DON'T THANK ME, SONNY-BOY! I DIDN'T DO IT FER YOU!
IF YOU WUZ RIGHT ABOUT MOLEY'S MACHINE KILLIN' MILLIONS O' PEOPLE UPSTAIRS, I FIGGER IT'LL TAKE ALL OF US T'STOP IT!
THEN WHAT'RE WE WAITING FOR, BIG MAN? IT'LL BE JUST LIKE OLD TIMES!
KNOW SOMETHIN', STRETCHO? YER AS CORNY AS EVER.
LET'S SEE IF YA CAN FIGHT WITH-OUT MAKIN' SPEECHES!
SURE I CAN, BUT IT'S NOT AS MUCH FUN!
LET'S GO, KIDDIES--
WELCOME TO CLOBBERIN' TIME!
4

Courtesy Jerry Ordway

The Fantastic Four #296 page 52 pencil art (photocopy)
by Jerry Ordway


FANTASTIC FOUR
#296
ORDWAY
52
TORCH: ILL BE OKAY, IM JUST TIRED! BEN: THEY'RE CONFUSED, REED, BUT BRACE YOURSELF....
CAUSE HERE THEY COME!
BEN GOES THRU CAVERN WALL, JOHNNY LIMITED TO BURSTS OF FLAME — REED GOES AROUND THEM!

Courtesy Jerry Ordway

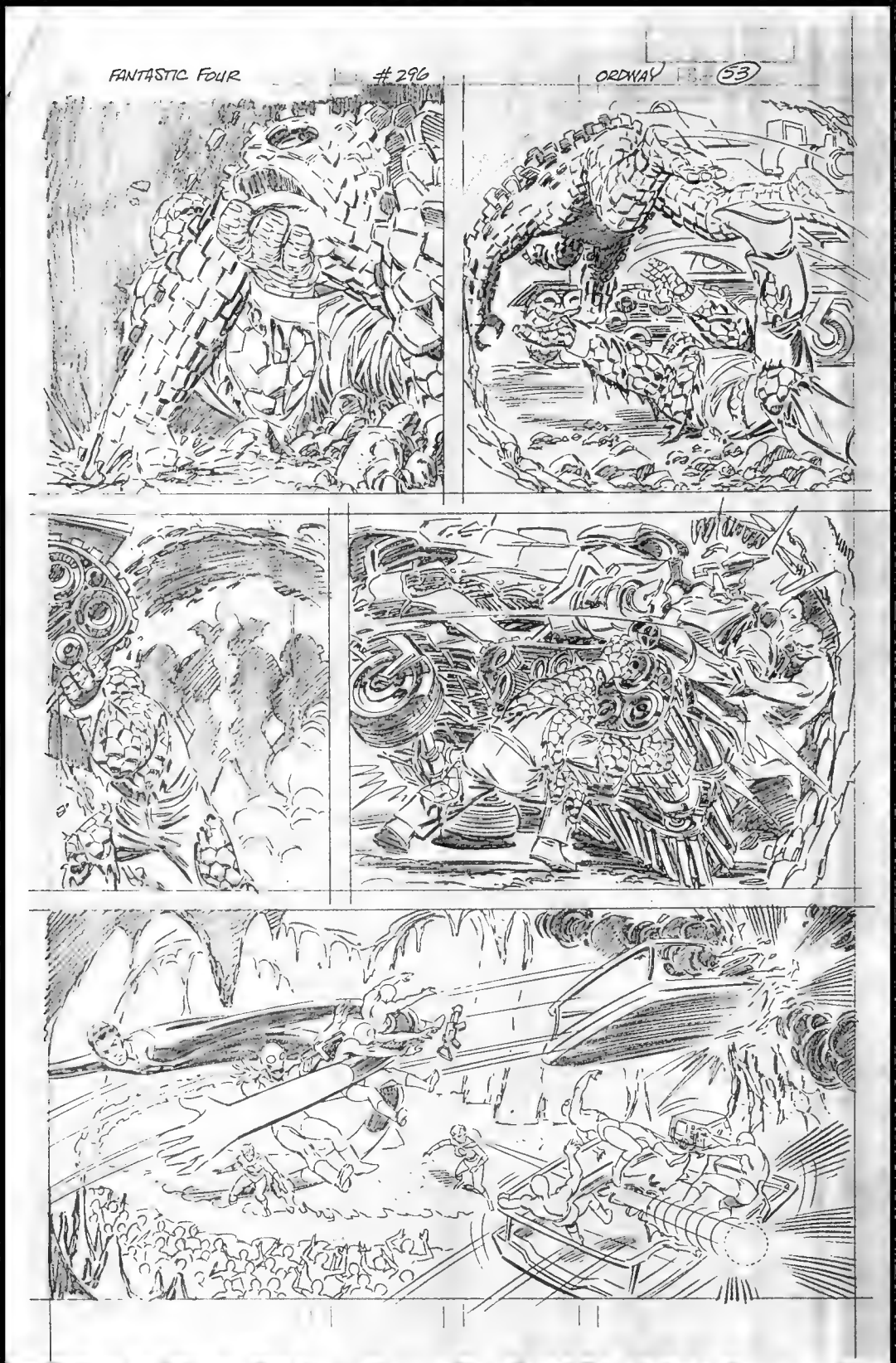
The Fantastic Four #296 page 52 original art
by Jerry Ordway & Bob Wiacek

#296

THAT GAVE US A CHANCE TA REGROUP, BUT NOW THEY'RE GITTIN' SET TA SWARM ALL OVER US!
WE'VE GOT TO BUY JOHNNY MORE TIME TO GET HIS FLAME BACK!
WE'VE BATTLED HOPELESS ODDS BEFORE, BEN!
NOW, WITH YOU AT OUR SIDE, NOTHING WILL STOP US!
YER JUST WHISTLIN' DIXIE, SUSIE, BUT I LIKE TH' SOUND OF IT!
THEN, A SPLIT-SECOND LATER...
HERE THEY COME!
}OWTCH! COULDN'T DODGE THIS BIG CREEP!
THERE ARE --SO MANY OF THEM!
DON'T TALK! SAVE YOUR STRENGTH! THIS IS IT!
MY FLAME'S COMING BACK!

Courtesy Jerry Ordway

The Fantastic Four #296 page 53 pencil art (photocopy)
by Jerry Ordway



Courtesy Jerry Ordway

The Fantastic Four #296 page 53 original art
by Jerry Ordway & Bob Wiacek

#296
NUTS! CHUCKLES HERE SMACKED ME RIGHT INTA THE MONSTER STORAGE AREA!
TAKE A POWDER, DING-A-LING! I AIN'T GOT TIME FER WALTZIN' AROUND!
THEY'LL BE NEEDIN' ME ON TH' OTHER SIDE O' THE WALL!
GOTTA GIT RID OF THESE CLOWNS FAST!
SORRY, YO-YO'S, TH' WARRANTY ON YER DUNE-BUGGY JUST RAN OUT!
JOHNNY AND SUE CAN'T HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER!
WITH BEN GONE, I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING FAST!

Courtesy Jerry Ordway

The Fantastic Four #296 page 59 original art (note alterations to panels 5-6)
by Jerry Ordway & Bob Wiacek

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
C'MON, MOVE IT! MOVE IT! I CAN'T HOLD THIS BLASTED THING UP MUCH LONGER!
LET ME HELP, BEN! I'LL HOLD IT WITH MY FORCE-F'IELD WHILE YOU TAKE JOHNNY TO THE SHORE!
FERGET IT, LADY! I GOT OTHER PLANS!
NO! THE ISLE IS COLLAPSING! YOU AND JOHNNY WILL BE TRAPPED IN THERE!
YOU 'N' STRETCHO HEAD FER THE BOAT! GO ON, TAKE OFF!
LET IT LIE, SUE! HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!
BUT, REED--THAT'S MY BROTHER IN THERE! WHAT IF BEN IS TRYING TO--
DON'T SAY IT, HONEY! DON'T EVEN THINK IT!
NOW COME ON! WE'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE THAT ALICIA AND HOPPER ARE SAFE!
I THINK I KNOW WHAT BEN IS UP TO! IT'S SOMETHING THAT ONLY HE CAN HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH!
THERE THEY ARE! HIS PLANE IS BEING SHATTERED AGAINST THE ROCKS, BUT AT LEAST THEY'RE SAFE IN THE LIFE RAFT!
BUT LOOK--BACK THERE! THE ISLAND IS SHATTERING!

Courtesy Jerry Ordway

The Fantastic Four #296 page 61 original art (note alterations to panels 5-6)
by Jerry Ordway & Bob Wiacek

FANTASTIC FOUR
#296
I CAN GUESS WHERE HE'S GOIN'! AIN'T NO WAY TO STOP 'IM! AIN'T NO REASON T'TRY!
HE'S GONNA END IT JUST THE WAY HE WANTS!
ME, I'LL DO WHAT HE SAID! IT'S JOHNNY'S ONLY CHANCE!
FEELS LIKE THE WHOLE ISLAND'S CAVIN' IN ON ME. BUT WE'RE PLUMB ROOTED HERE FER SEVEN MINUTES!
NO WAY THE KID'S GONNA STAY A LIVIN' MONSTER--
LIKE ME.
EITHER WE MAKE IT--OR WE BOTH CASH IN!
BUT NO ONE CAN SAY I DIDN'T TRY!
MEANWHILE, SEEMINGLY OBLIVIOUS TO THE CARNAGE ALL AROUND HIM, THE MOLE MAN RETURNS TO HIS PRIVATE "TREATMENT ROOM"...
I HEAR THEM INSIDE, WAITING FOR MY RETURN!
I MUST NOT DIS-APPOINT THEM!
"TO THEM I AM CHARMING AND WITTY! EVEN HANDSOME!
"BEST OF ALL --I AM ONE OF THEM!
"ONLY HERE AM I HAPPY! ONLY HERE AM I LOVED!"
COME TO ME, MY FRIENDS! WE'LL BE TOGETHER ALWAYS!
THE MOLE MAN IS WHERE HE BELONGS!
(A)

Courtesy Jerry Ordway

Marvel Age #37 (April 1986) cover
by John Byrne & Jack Abel

Marvel Age #37 recapped the evolution of the Marvel Universe and detailed John Byrne's plans for *The Fantastic Four* #296…and beyond.

MARVEL® 25TH ANNIVERSARY

It started in November 1961. The story you've heard so often: **Reed Richards**, scientist and **Ben Grimm**, test pilot, accompanied by Reed's fiance **Sue Storm** and her kid brother **Johnny**, took a risky flight into space—and were changed by cosmic radiation into the colorful quartet known as **the Fantastic Four**. Another story, you may have only heard a time or two: **Martin Goodman**, publisher of a small line of comics featuring mostly monster stories, teenage humor and westerns, told his editor to get moving on a super hero series. The editor wanted to do something more challenging than had been done in super hero comics heretofore, and he and this small company's major artist put their heads together...soon coming up with a new magazine called THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

Judging from what's happened since, the idea was a good one. The new magazine hung on in a market dominated by much larger companies. By May 1962, a second title was added to the fledgling adventure line. This was THE INCREDIBLE HULK, and though the original series lasted only six issues, the character is very clearly still with us today. Also in May 1962, in the fourth issue of THE FANTASTIC FOUR, **the Sub-Mariner** *returned* (having been originally created back when Marvel, known as Timely Comics, was first publishing super hero material, in the World War II era), and stayed around to shake things up.

X-MEN
NEVER WITHIN THE MEMORY OF MAN WAS THERE A "CLASS" SUCH AS THIS ! NEVER WAS THERE A "TEACHER" SUCH AS PROFESSOR X ! AND NEVER WERE THERE "STUDENTS" SUCH AS THE .
CYCLOPS PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR, SIR
THE ANGEL REPORTING SIR
ICEMAN RIGHT ON SCHEDULE SIR !
THE BEAST IS HERE SIR !
BEHOLD NOW, PREPARE YOURSELF FOR ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING READING EXPERIENCES OF LIFE ! FOR YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE FASCINATING, UNPREDICTABLE WORLD OF

TALES OF SUSPENSE
Featuring
IRON MAN AND CAPTAIN AMERICA
BIG NEWS!
STARTING WITH THIS GREAT ISSUE
2 BIG FEATURES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!
IRON MAN BATTLES THE BLACK KNIGHT!!
THE COMET OF THE SENSATIONAL NEW CAPTAIN AMERICA

The summer and fall of 1962 were good ones for Marvel, introducing four more series. July saw the beginning of **the Ant-Man** series in TALES TO ASTONISH, which had been a monster/fantasy series until then (Ant-Man first appeared in his **Henry Pym** identity in January, and adopted a costume and became an adventure hero in July). In August, JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY switched over from tales of earth-threatening monsters with names like Spragg to stories about a blond-tressed Thunder God who went by the name of **Thor**. Two months later, another "mystery" magazine switched emphasis, as **the Human Torch**, regularly seen in THE FANTASTIC FOUR, got a solo series in STRANGE TALES, where he was soon joined by his FF-partner, **the Thing**.

It was between that first Thor adventure and the Human Torch

going solo that, in the last issue of yet another mystery/fantasy/monster series, AMAZING FANTASY, **Stan Lee** and **Steve Ditko** introduced a young man who gains incredible powers and learns of the great responsibility they bring. They called the character **Spider-Man**, cancelled the magazine, and promptly forgot about it. Who would buy a hero based on *spiders*, after all?

Plenty of people, as it turned out — and spurred on by the sales figures, THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN joined the Marvel line as a regular title six months later, in March 1963. Stan and the Marvel artists knew they were on a roll by that time, and things were popping. The same month that Spidey debuted in his own book, TALES OF SUSPENSE moved its mystery stories to the back of the magazine, and the **Iron Man** series began. In May, Marvel experimented with a new kind of war series, with an emphasis on the action-packed stories and character concerns that were becoming the Marvel hallmark, and SGT FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS began fighting World War II. And two months later, **Doctor Strange** joined the Human Torch in STRANGE TALES, initiating the concept of the "split-book," a magazine housing two separate, equally-important series.

MEN CALL HIM DR. STRANGE!
NEVER HAVE YOU KNOWN HIS LIKE!
IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE AND PRIVILEGE FOR THE EDITORS OF STRANGE TALES TO PRESENT, QUIETLY AND WITHOUT FANFARE, THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES, BASED UPON A DIFFERENT KIND OF SUPER-HERO...
DR. STRANGE
MASTER OF
BLACK MAGIC!

It was in September of that year that Stan Lee and **Jack Kirby** unleashed a double-barrelled blast that had a major effect on the Marvel Universe as it exists today. The first title was THE AVENGERS, and though there had been characters from one series appearing in another before (most notably between FANTASTIC FOUR and STRANGE TALES), this was the first full-scale joining of Marvel's series into one coherent whole. The other series? THE X-MEN, which introduced the concept of *mutants* and humanity's fear of them—a concept that has run through almost all of Marvel's titles, underscoring the idea that all the stories happen in the same world.

Captain America became the second major survivor of the Timely era when he thawed out of suspended animation and joined **the Avengers** in their fourth issue (and joined Iron Man in TALES OF SUSPENSE, making it the second split-book, in October). **Daredevil** premiered full-blown in his own regular series in April 1964, **the Hulk** rounded out the third split-book in July as he joined **Giant-Man** (formerly Ant-Man, later to be **Goliath**, **Yellowjacket**, and still later plain Hank Pym again—though he and **the Wasp** were to be bumped from the pages of ASTONISH by the Sub Mariner long before *any* of this happened) in TALES TO ASTONISH, and in August of 1965, the Human Torch and the Thing vacated their STRANGE TALES slot in favor of a series chronicling the modern day adventures of the leader of **the Howling Commandos** — except that by '65, **Nick Fury** was a colonel, and leading the hi-tech forces of the espionage group called S.H.I.E.L.D.*

And with the start of the S.H.I.E.L.D. series, the ten titles that are generally considered to have formed the classic Marvel Universe were complete. Oh sure, there were plenty more — but it's these ten that carry the range of interlocking concepts — from cosmic adventure to global espionage to inter-dimensional mysticism—that made the world wake up and see just what comics could be! With the Marvel Universe chugging along at full steam, it wasn't long before THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN was comicdom's best selling title, before names like Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko were being bandied about TV talk shows and college campuses, and before the word Marvel, for hundreds of thousands of people, became a guarantee of the best in comics literature.

Today, it's 1986 — twenty-five years since the Fantastic Four first took off to explore the unknown...and it's time to celebrate. We've got lots of plans to make 1986 a year-long party — and we're inviting everyone! What are we gonna do? Well, for starters, FANTASTIC FOUR #296, which marks the official 25th anniversary of Marvel, will be...not a normal-length, not a double-length, but a *triple*-length spectacular that brings the FF back to their beginnings — and features a wild party with an unbelievable guest list!

Five years ago, when **John Byrne** wrote and drew the FF's 20th anniversary story, "Terror In A Tiny Town," he described working on it as doing "Fantastic Four—the Movie." This one, he tells us, will be more like "Fantastic Four—the Comic Book. This is going to be sort of the ultimate comic book version of the FF, because it will be tying into so many things that relate to earlier stuff. The whole thrust of FF #236, the 20th anniversary story, was to do a story that was more or less completely divorced from the regular book, so that it could sort of stand on its own as a "movie." If you'd never heard of these guys before, you could come in on this and pick up everything you needed to know. In the 25th anniversary issue, I'm going to be doing essentially the same thing, in that you'll be able to pick up on these guys even if you've never seen them before, but I also want to fill it up with all kinds of little, almost subliminal, fannish type stuff that people will recognize as being references to earlier stories."

So what's going to happen? John was willing to give out a few details. "The title is 'Return to Monster Island.' The basic premise is that Reed and Sue and Johnny and **She-Hulk** are out in California -as a result of stuff that's happening in the previous issues — and they go out to the old rocket base out in Central City. It's all grown over with weeds and looking pretty scraggy, the way Cape Canaveral is these days. The first part of the issue, as it now stands, will be a retelling of FANTASTIC FOUR #1, as they tell their origin to She-Hulk —their first battle with **the Mole Man** and all that stuff." But the Fantastic Four, being the Fantastic Four, aren't known for having peaceful times, and sure enough, they quickly are caught up in an adventure, as the world is ravaged by

* * *

*and if you don't know what *those* letters stand for—turn in your complete set of THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE right now!

globe-spanning earthquakes—earthquakes that Reed Richards manages to track back to...Monster Island? But as far as they know, the Mole Man blew Monster Island up at the end of FF #1.

"So they go tripping off to Monster Island, or where it used to be, and discover that what is now there is basically a very large hole—into which sea water has been pouring for years. It's been gushing down into the tunnels that the Mole Man appropriated from the Deviants—and has managed in many cases to work its way quite a ways down into the vicinities of the center of the Earth—as a result of which, it's coming back up as super-heated steam, which is causing vast pressures to build up underneath the crust of the Earth—which is what's causing all of these giant earthquakes, globally."

"They are about to do what they can to undo this damage, when...the Mole Man turns up. He's still there, still lurking around, and he's got all kinds of things happening involving that group of outcasts that he put together. And what he's found is...one of the last dangling things that I felt I had to address from #1 was the Valley of Diamonds. The Mole Man has discovered that the Valley of Diamonds is not in fact a natural phenomenon. The diamonds are mystical. And he's discovered that if he melts down the diamonds he gets this glop, which, if you immerse yourself in it, you are transformed into whatever you are in your heart of hearts."

What follows is a bizarre, multi-leveled conflict involving the FF, who are trying to save the world, the Mole Man, who is trying to help his people, and who's sure the FF have come to screw things up...and another character, one "who's been missing for a while."

"The Thing has returned to Monster Island." By this time, the Thing will have undergone drastic changes, the nature of which we dare not reveal, and he's decided that "Monster Island is the only place for a monster like him." Big developments are in store for the Thing, including his long awaited reunion with the FF, and a look into his inner self, as the Thing faces just what he really is in his "heart of hearts." As the Fantastic Four try to deal with a world threatened by earthquakes, the return of the Thing, the menace of the Mole Man and the desperate need to get the Mole Man's outcasts off what's left of Monster Island before it completely explodes, well...you didn't think we were going to tell you *everything*, did you? Suffice it to say that there *is* a resolution, one that doesn't involve the destruction of Earth and everything on it (that'll come in a future issue, maybe), and the single most dramatic development ever in the life of the Mole Man.

And then, John assures us, "we get back to New York for an anniversary party! It's kind of a separate story at the end of the issue, which unveils the FF's new headquarters, and has sort of the entire Marvel Universe guest-starring, including (of course) folks from Marvel."

So what does the future hold for Marvel's flagship title "Well, with the return of the Thing, we will have to address the very serious question of whether they will be the Fantastic Four or the Fantastic *Five*. The 'Get the She-Hulk out of here' mail has dropped off almost to nothing, and has been replaced by 'What are you going to do with the She-Hulk once the Thing comes back' mail. There are definite contingents out there that seem to want both of them. Whether we will actually go that far, I don't know, but it will certainly be the issue we're addressing in #297. Somewhere in here, I'm probably going to have to finish up 'The Last Galactus Story,' now that EPIC ILLUSTRATED's been cancelled. And then we've got, at least at this point, matrimonial plans for #300. Whether those will actually come to pass, I don't know."

And what about the rest of Marvel's anniversary year? Well, we're still feverishly planning it out, but there are going to be Marvel parties at all the major comics conventions, with all sorts of giveaways—special Marvel *TV commercials* (get your local comics shop owner to check into it...he'll be glad he did!)—the Fantastic Four, live and in person, making apperances at conventions, comics stores, and elsewhere—a special 25th anniversary logo on all our books (designed by MARVEL AGE's own Jim Salicrup)—and tributes to Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and all the other comics greats without whom there never would have *been* a Marvel Universe!

And there's more. We can't reveal any specifics yet, but it will be the single biggest thing to happen to Marvel Comics since November 1961...and it's happening in 1986! Sound like a tall order? Sound impossible? Trust us. There are going to be ten all-new titles, ten new series that will have as big an effect on Marvel as those ten original titles that formed the Marvel Universe itself!

We hate to do this to you, but we've got to stop here. For more news on Marvel's 25th anniversary celebration, and on the New Ten...just keep watching MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE. We promise to tell you everything...just as soon as we're allowed to! In the meantime, we're glad you could make it to the party—and we hope you have a great year!

—*Kurt Busiek*

Marvel Age #40 (August 1986) cover
by JayJay Jackson

Marvel Age #40's "Stan's Soapbox" column also announced Stan's return to *The Fantastic Four* for issue #296's triple-sized anniversary extravaganza.

STAN'S SOAPBOX

Hi, culture lovers!

Wanna win a No Prize? Here's your chance. Just tell me what year my last "Soapbox" appeared in our mighty Marvel mags. It was so long ago that I can't remember!

And now, thanks to the request of ye exemplary editor, **Slim-Jim Salicrup**, here I am back again after all these years. Good ol' Jim phoned to tell me that time has spawned whole new generations of Marvel fans who probably think **Stan Lee** is some sort of fictitious figurehead, like MAD Magazine's **Alfred E. Neuman**. Well, Alf may be as funny-looking as I, but there the resemblance ceases! I think, therefore I am! I write, therefore I'm tired!

Okay, now you can relax. That's as heavy as I'm gonna get.

For those of you who are new to the magnificence of Marvel, I congratulate you on discovering the most exciting form of entertainment since homework assignments. But the time is come to give you newcomers a word of explanation, to answer the question on everyone's lips, "Who is Stan Lee—and who cares?"

Thousands of years ago, when **Spider-Man** only had one costume and the batty Bullpen had only one universe to worry about, I was Marvel's Editor-in Chief; sort of like a prehistoric **Jim Shooter**.

Since I'm really a ham at heart, and love seeing my name in print, I started writing a column each month called Stan's Soapbox. In this column I'd wax rhapsodic about the wonderment of our mags and I'd keep reminding our readers (both of them) what an enormous debt of gratitude they owed us for providing them with so much pleasure, joy and fulfillment.

Inasmuch as I was probably the only one who ever read my Soapbox, I never received any complaints. So, I kept writing it month after month and the fact that I soon ran out of things to say never stopped me from continuing, just as it doesn't stop me now.

Anyway, years later it was rumored that a small earthquake had jolted most of the continental United States. Only the Bullpen and I knew it wasn't an earthquake at all; it was a gigantic sigh of relief from readers everywhere when I finally stopped writing the Soapbox and moved to California to become a mixed up movie mogul.

But now, things have come full circle. After all these years, I'm back to haunt you again. Our sagacious Mr. Salicrup wants me to keep writing these merry little monographs in each issue of MARVEL AGE. I guess he figures it'll drive away the majority of his readers, thereby relieving him of most of his work load!

Well, whatever the reason, you're stuck with me now.

Okay, that's the bad news. Now here's the good news.

In this fabulous free country of ours, nobody can force you to read anything. So you can outsmart ol' Slim Jim—you can still get this mag every month and not read the Soapbox! It'll be a great favor to me, because then I won't have to be careful about my spelling.

Now, nobody can say I didn't warn ya! Starting next month, I'll lift your spirits and regale your soul with my usual heart-rending, behind-the-scenes tales of what's happening out here in filmland and what wonderment is awaiting you on mighty Marvel's movie horizons!

So, till next ish, keep happy, keep healthy, and keep the faith! Remember, wherever you go, whatever you do, the eyes of Marvel are upon thee!

Excelsior!

Stan

STAN LEE RETURNS FOR FANTASTIC FOUR ANNIVERSARY BASH!

That's right! The twenty-fifth anniversary issue of the World's Greatest Comics Magazine will feature the titanic scripting by **Stan** himself! This mammoth sixty page story is special in more ways than one! The issue's plot is by editor-in-chief **Jim Shooter**, and it's being drawn by some of the finest talents in the business! And Stan has agreed to take on the task of scripting the story himself!

The plot concerns the FF's return to the Island of the **Mole Man**, where they had their very first adventure! Not only that, but estranged FF cofounder **Ben Grimm** has taken up residence there, and seems to be in league with the Mole Man.

We'll pass on more information to you as it is revealed to us. In the meantime, remember—that's FANTASTIC FOUR #296, coming your way as part of the twenty fifth anniversary of Marvel Comics!

As part of *Marvel Age* #40's celebration of the founding of the Marvel Universe, future *Marvels* writer Kurt Busiek took a walk down memory lane with Stan Lee.

Quick—turn to the inside front cover of this issue of MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE, and look at the top of the page. What does it say? "Stan Lee Presents," that's what it says. And it says that, somewhere, in every Marvel comic. Why? What has **Stan Lee** done to have this kind of effect on Marvel? Well, in a very real way, the Stan Lee story *is* the story of Marvel Comics, and you're about to find out just how, as we turn the tables on our Fearless Leader, and for a change, *we* present Stan Lee!

Stan is, as he puts it, "one of the few native New Yorkers extant," born in Manhattan in 1922, and raised in Manhattan, "except for a few years in the Bronx when I was a teenager, and I went to Dewitt-Clinton High School." While at Dewitt-Clinton, Stan joined the staff of THE MAGPIE, the school's magazine, where he honed the editorial and production skills that would soon hold him in good stead in the fledgling comics industry. Stan tells a story about his high school days that might be of interest to Dewitt-Clinton students today: "The editorial offices were in a tower way at the top of the building. One day some workmen were painting the tower and they left the ladder—a long, fifty-foot ladder going up to the very top of the tower. I climbed up it and on the ceiling I wrote 'Stan Lee Is God.' Even as a kid, I was not very humble. And then I climbed down the ladder and took the ladder away. Now as far as I know—that was decades ago—I would like to think that it's still up there, because I don't think that they've ever painted it since then." If any Dewitt Clinton student can find out if that historic graffitum is still there, we'd appreciate your dropping us a line and letting us know, okay?

It was fresh out of high school, in 1939, that Stan got a job as "staff writer, proofreader and general all-around gofer" at Timely Comics, but that quickly changed. The editors left the company and the publisher, **Martin Goodman**, asked Stan to fill in for a while. "I think they forgot about me," says Stan, because the job stuck. In a business where it's the stories and art that count, Stan's youth didn't seem to matter, although Stan is fond of telling a story about one visitor to the office who was obviously expecting an older man in charge. "The guy looked at me and said, 'Hey, kid—where can I find Mr. Lee.' And I knew he'd be embarrassed if I said, 'I'm Mr. Lee,' so I said 'He isn't in right now, can I take a message?'"

At the time, the Timely Comics staff was quite small. Most of the material Timely published was provided by a freelance agency called Funnies, Inc. Funnies had artists working for them, such as **Carl Burgos** (who created the original *Human Torch*) and **Bill Everett** (who created the *Sub-Mariner*) they would do stories for Funnies, and Funnies would deliver them to Marvel. Still, Stan got to meet and work with Carl and Bill, as well as talents like **Jack Kirby**, **Joe Simon**, **Syd Shores**, and more. "It was great," Stan says, "because I was busy as hell, I was writing stories and I was editing artwork, and I did a lot more. It was such a small staff, if there were lettering corrections to make I'd make 'em myself, if a story had to be colored, I'd color it myself, I would do some inking myself—whatever had to be done. You didn't even think about it, you grabbed a brush and you did it. So I did a lot of the production myself, and paste-ups and photostatting, all of that. I've always loved being busy, so as long as I was busy, I was happy."

One of the titles Timely published was TERRY-TOONS COMICS, which Stan remembers as his first exposure to the movie business. The comic was based on **Paul Terry's** animated featurettes, and Stan "used to go up to Paul Terry Studios, which were in New Rochelle. It was a real animation studio where they produced animated *movies* and I was so impressed, talking to Paul Terry and so forth." During his trips to Terry's studio, Stan met an animator named **Vince Fago**, with whom he became quite friendly. So in the early 1940s, when Stan went into the Army for three years, he chose Vince to be Timely's editor in his absence.

By the time Stan came back from the Army, Timely was producing their own material instead of buying it from Funnies. "It was more fun. All the artists were there, right on staff." One of the artists who worked for Timely then was **Al Jaffee**, who did a feature called ZIGGY PIG AND SILLY SEAL. Al is currently one of MAD MAGAZINE's top artists, as is another Timely alum, **Dave Berg**.

Stan describes Timely's editorial credo as "we did a lot of Westerns and a lot of romance books and a lot of horror stories and a lot of war magazines—whatever was the trend at the time." If there was a romance trend, Timely would put out romances. If teenage humor magazines were big, Timely would put those out. "But whatever we did," Stan says, "we did dozens of them, at all times. We were just like a big production outfit, grinding the stuff out. And that went on until 1960 or '61 when we did THE FANTASTIC FOUR and that started the whole change, started the whole Marvel Comics thing."

The "whole Marvel Comics thing" began in 1961. The comics line Stan edited (and wrote most of) included titles such as MILLIE THE MODEL, PATSY WALKER, LIFE WITH MILLIE, PATSY AND HEDY, KID COLT OUTLAW, RAWHIDE KID, TWO-GUN KID, LOVE ROMANCES, and a whole slew of horror/monster comics with titles such as TALES OF SUSPENSE, TALES TO ASTONISH, STRANGE TALES, JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY and so forth. "We were turning out comics by the carload," Stan recalls, "but nothing much was happening." Martin Goodman, the publisher, pointed out to Stan that National Comics was doing very well with a super-

hero team, and suggested that Stan work up a team of super heroes for Marvel.

Stan was game, but he decided not to simply create a batch of super heroes like all the other super heroes on the stands. "For just this once," Stan decided, "I would do the type of story I myself would enjoy reading if I were a comic book reader." He wanted a series that featured heroes, yes, but heroes that would be as much like real people as could be managed.

In early 1961 Stan created the team Martin Goodman had asked for. We hardly need describe them, as they're celebrating their 25th anniversary this year. In fact, the whole Marvel Universe dates its origin from the first issue of THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

The new magazine came out, like any magazine from the little company—and it wasn't until the mail started coming in that Stan started to get an idea of what he and Jack Kirby had begun. Before THE FANTASTIC FOUR, Marvel's comics would get a few letters, but nothing like the mail that came in on the FF. Fans liked the characters, sympathized with them and wanted to see what happened next. They wanted Reed and Sue's romance to develop, the Thing to find a cure for his condition, and more. Because Stan was determined to create characters that *he* cared about, he ended up with characters that *other people* cared about too, and the sales reflected it. THE FANTASTIC FOUR was a hit—and the only question was what to do next.

You've seen what was next—it eventually grew into the Marvel Universe, as we know it today. Specifically what was next was THE INCREDIBLE HULK, **Ant-Man** (in TALES TO ASTONISH), **Thor** (in JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY), **Spider-Man** (in AMAZING FANTASY), **Iron Man** (in TALES OF SUSPENSE), **Dr. Strange** (in STRANGE TALES), THE AVENGERS, THE X-MEN, and so on. It's pretty clear what was happening. The monster books were slowly but surely fading, being replaced by super hero adventure series, and new series were springing up to join them. Marvel was expanding. But the new line wasn't just springing like a mushroom farm. It had to be written, drawn, lettered, colored, edited, etc. People such as **Don Heck**, **Steve Ditko**, and **Dick Ayers** were handling the art, and Marvel could hire more pro-

duction people as their needs grew But the writing and editing? That was still Stan's job.

"I was writing them and I was editing them and I was the art director and everything," Stan remembers, "and I said to my publisher, Martin Goodman, I said 'I need more time to write, I think I'd better take Wednesdays off.' I told my wife I was going to ask, and she said, 'You can't ask for Wednesdays off nobody takes one day a week off!' I said, 'I've got to.' So I asked, and he said okay, it sounded like a good idea So I would stay home on Wednesdays and get a lot of writing done. Then, as we added more and more books, I told my wife I was going to ask to have Tuesdays and Thursdays off, because I had twice as much writing to do. She said, 'I'm embarrassed, they'll throw you out of the office – you can't ask for something like that' But I asked, and it ended up that I took Tuesdays and Thursdays off, so I went to the office Monday, Wednesday and Friday Then I still had more books to write, so I took a deep breath and asked if I could just come into the office on Tuesday and Thursday, and I would stay home Monday, Wednesday and Friday and get all the writing done. It ended up that I used to stay home Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and I would just go into the office Tuesdays and Thursdays, and I was able to be the editor and the art director under those circumstances. 'Cause I was writing almost all the books, so they didn't require much editing. That is, they may have required a lot of editing, but I wasn't aware of it, because I was reading my own stuff, and I loved it!"

Stan was able to keep this up for a while, editing the entire line and writing most of it from his Long Island home—although his "home" and "office" duties frequently overlapped. "A lot of the artists — Don Heck, for instance — lived on the Island too He would just come out to my house while he was drawing scripts, and we would go over them, and so on. So while I was home, it was like I was working at the office." But as Marvel kept expanding, it became harder and harder for Stan to do everything, the way he used to when Marvel was a tiny little office, and eventually Stan had to find new writers to take some of the load Stan still edited everything, but that became harder,

too, since editing someone else's writing took more time than editing his own.

At the same time, Marvel was expanding in different ways. There were new titles, of course, but there were also new opportunities for the Marvel characters. As Marvel's fame grew, the possibilities open to the company grew as well. There were people who wanted to make animated cartoons about the Marvel characters. There were colleges who wanted someone from Marvel to come speak on campus. There were movie producers. There were conventions. There were new worlds to conquer, and Stan was the man to conquer them. Marvel needed someone who could deal with its new opportunities, so Stan relinquished the editor's position to **Roy Thomas**, and stepped up into Martin Goodman's old job, becoming publisher and creative director.

It's hard to describe what an editor does—but it's even harder to describe what a publisher does. We asked Stan what his duties were, and he thought for a while and said, "I think I was . . I don't know. I know I was busy as hell all the time. I used to come home to my wife and say, 'You know, I don't really know what I do. I never had a minute to myself, but I'm not sure what I was doing.' I was answering phone calls and going to meetings, and trying to set up little movies and television things even before we came out to the Coast, those kind of deals. And I did a lot of traveling. I did a lot of lecturing, I attended a lot of conventions, and . . I don't know." Whatever it was Stan was doing, it was working well, however. Well enough so that it grew, like Marvel had been doing since FANTASTIC FOUR #1, and Stan began combining his energies with others again. "I did a lot of things with **Jim Galton** when he came in as President of Marvel," Stan recalls. "He and I worked on a lot of projects together. Jim was great, because he was always trying to move the company forward in a business way, which is just what we always needed. I think I enjoyed working with Jim about as much as I've enjoyed working with anybody in the world since I can remember. Say, if you ask Jim, he can probably tell you what I did as Publisher!"

The problem with being at the head of an expanding company like Stan was is that the opportunities and fields of endeavor keep pyramiding outward, and the only way to keep an eye on everything is to stay at the top of the pyramid. But as the pyramid grows, the man at the top becomes farther and farther removed from the day-to-day workings of the company, the hands-on creation of the comics that makes all the rest possible. And Stan didn't want to get too far away from the creative end of things since that's what he enjoyed most. So when Marvel started Marvel Productions, our animation studio, out in California, Stan decided to go along, "to be the creative head of the studio and do animation. I'm also putting together as many movie deals as I can, and I work with the people involved in our movies, and I've never been happier or had a better time working on all these movies and television shows and our cartoons for the animated studio."

But at Marvel Productions, like whatever Stan involves himself in, things keep popping. "What's happened at the studio, it's like *deja vu*, it's like Marvel in the Sixties all over again. Little by little, I'm getting more and more involved in the stories and the artwork, and I'm sort of half becoming the editor and art director at the studio, like I used to be at Marvel Comics!" And in case you wondered, yes, he stays home on Wednesday. "I don't do as much writing as I used to—I just write the SPIDER MAN newspaper strip. But I do a lot of other things—I have to write outlines for movies and premises and I have a lot of scripts I have to read and edit, and I have to have a lot of meetings with people, and I just can't do it while I'm here at the studio. So I do all of that Wednesdays and Saturdays and Sundays. And I was laughing with my wife the other day, I can picture, if we start getting busier, I'll have to ask if I can be home Tuesdays and Thursdays, and here we go again!"

Kurt Busiek

Marvel Press Poster #27 – Marvel 25th Anniversary (1986)
by Kerry Gammill & Josef Rubinstein

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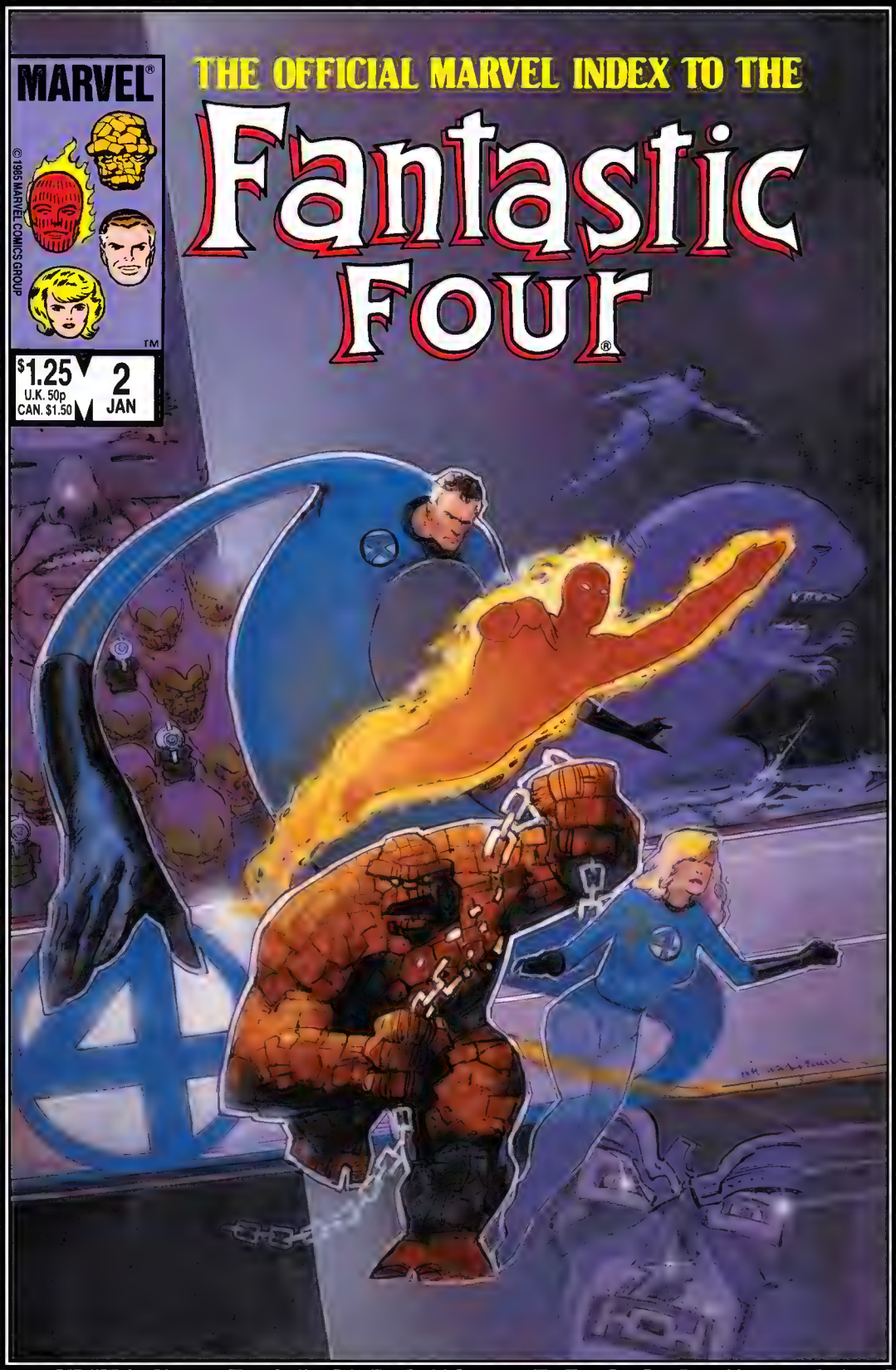
The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #1 (December 1985) cover by John Byrne

The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #2 (January 1986) cover
by Bill Sienkiewicz

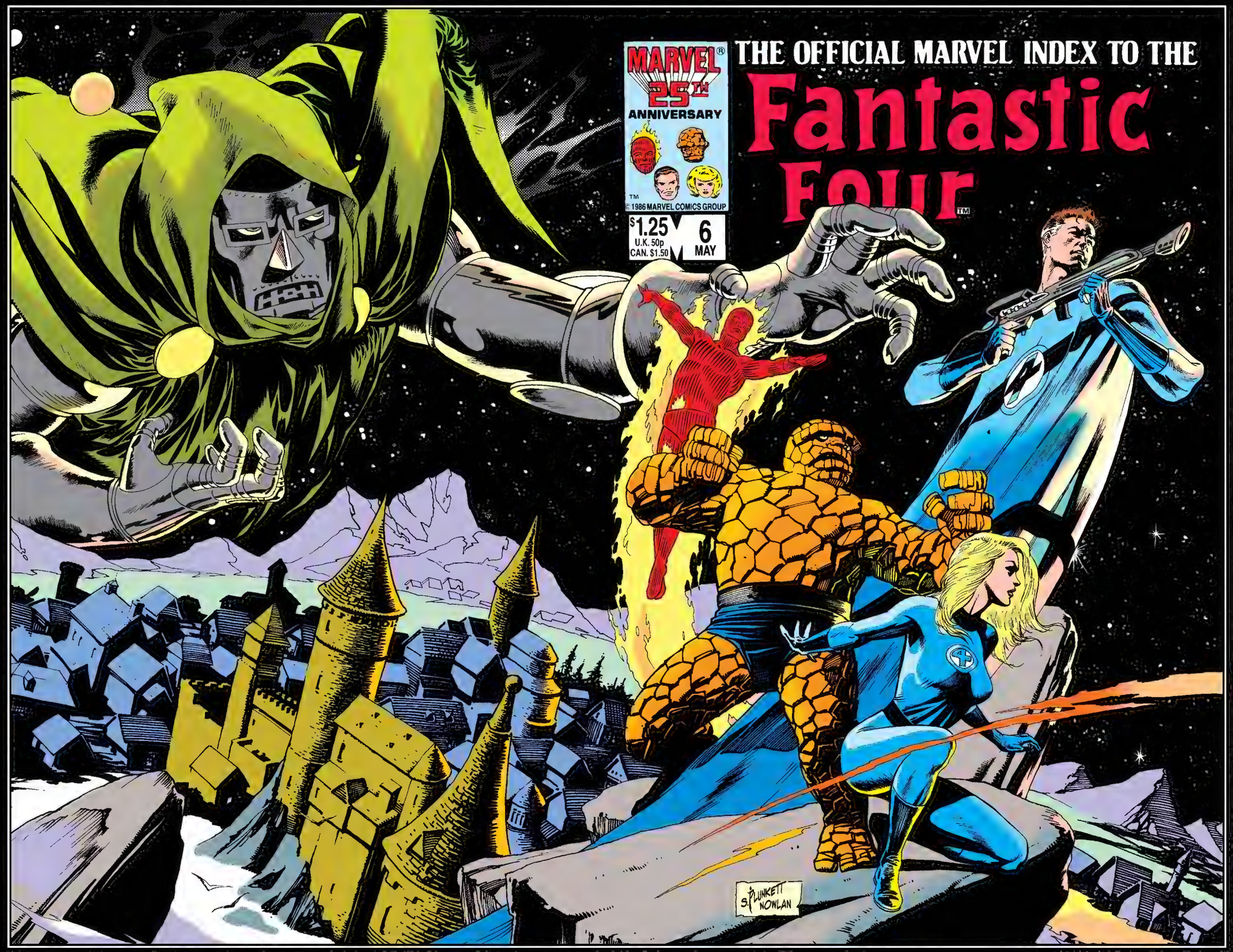


The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #3 (February 1986) cover
by Dave Simons

The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #4 (March 1986) cover
by Keith Pollard

The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #5 (April 1986) cover
by Kerry Gammill & Bob Layton

The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #6 (May 1986) cover
by Sandy Plunkett & Kevin Nowlan

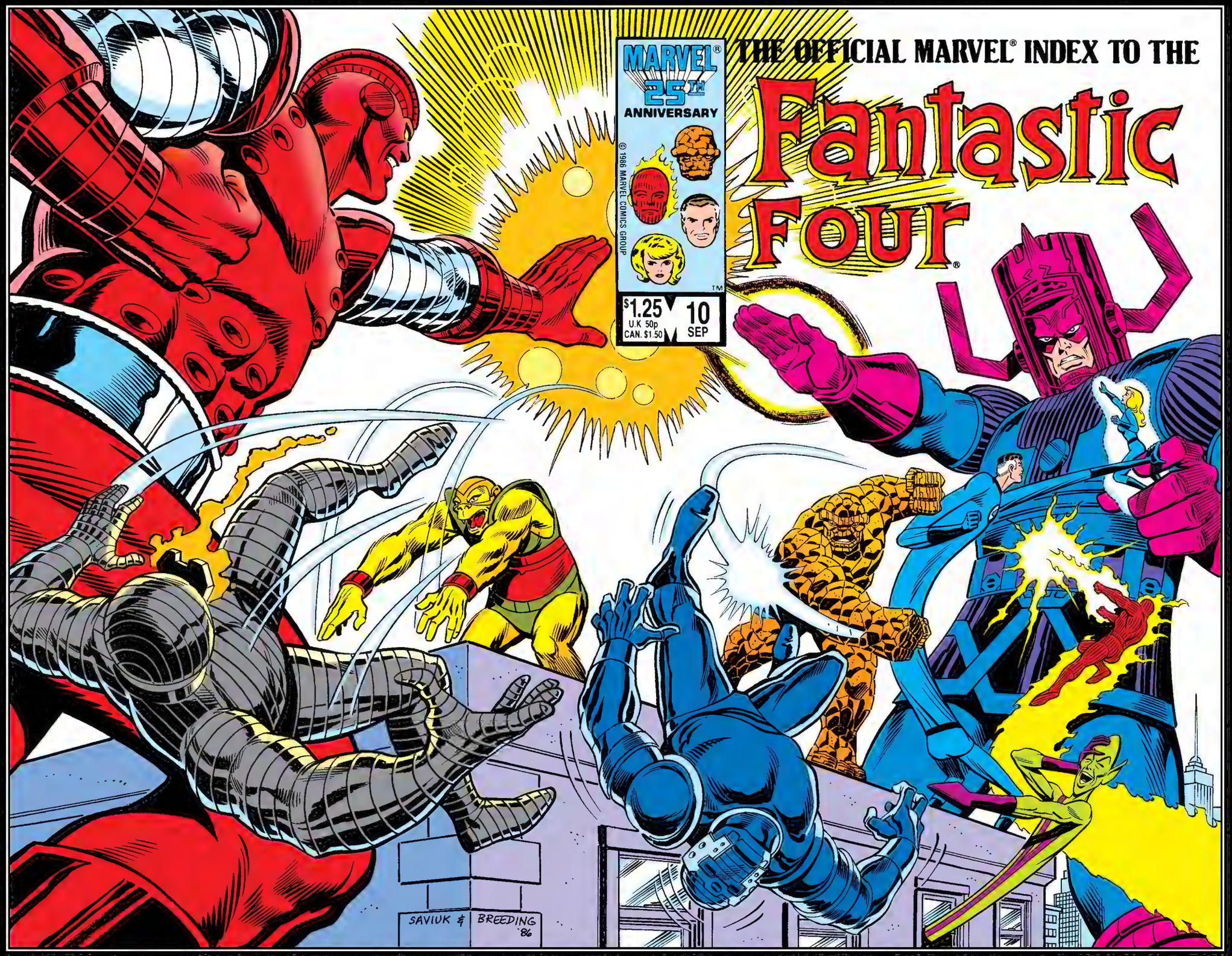


The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #7 (June 1986) cover
by Keith Pollard & Joe Sinnott

The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #8 (July 1986) cover
by Tom Lyle, Tom Morgan & Joe Sinnott

The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #9 (August 1986) cover
by Tom Lyle & Scott Williams

The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #10 (September 1986) cover
by Alex Saviuk & Brett Breeding



The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #11 (October 1986) cover
by Keith Pollard

The Official Marvel Index to the Fantastic Four #12 (January 1987) cover
by Richard Howell & Jack Abel

ALL MY FAULT

BY KURT BUSIEK

FROM X-MEN: PHOENIX RISING TPB (1999)

If you haven't read these stories yet, you might want to skip this introduction until you have—I'm going to talk about how the story came to be, and as such, I may end up spoiling surprises for new readers. That said, onward…

To call these stories controversial, when they first came out, would be an understatement. It had been five years since the X-Man known as Phoenix—Jean Grey, or so we thought—had sacrificed herself to save the universe from the inevitable threat of Dark Phoenix. And here was Marvel, telling readers that no, that wasn't quite Jean, and she'd really been alive all this time?

Some readers were pleased, of course, and glad to see Jean back. Others were horrified, feeling that to tamper with the story in which Phoenix died was to rob it of its power, and turn it into a travesty. "Who came up with this rotten idea?" they wanted to know.

Well, uh, me.

And here's how it came to be…

Back in 1980, while I was in college, some friends and I heard through the grapevine that Jean's death had been decreed, and would hit in *X-Men* #137. We didn't have the Internet back then, but news traveled fast—and we heard not only that Jim Shooter, editor-in-chief of Marvel back then, had demanded that Jean die for her acts as Dark Phoenix (specifically, killing the entire planet of D'Bari), but that he wouldn't allow any creators to resurrect her, unless some way could be found that left her not guilty of Dark Phoenix's crimes.

We were aghast—we were all fans of the original X-Men, and hated the idea of any of the original team being killed off. But in addition, we were intrigued by the caveat—that she couldn't come back unless she was innocent. We spent a fine evening talking comics, and working out possible scenarios for Jean's return—a return from a death we hadn't yet seen. My idea was that Phoenix hadn't really been Jean—but an incarnation of the Phoenix-force (something Chris Claremont had seemed to at least hint at when he made references to Phoenix being a separate entity from Jean) that had used Jean as a template to give itself form. Dark Phoenix, to my mind, was the inevitable corruption of the resulting entity as it grew further and further apart from its source. And that would mean Jean was still alive, cocooned at the bottom of Jamaica Bay.

Now mind you, this wasn't anything I intended to pitch to Marvel. It was just a creative exercise, a way for a few friends to have some fun, and vent our annoyance at a story we didn't like the sound of. I filed the story away in my mind, and that was that…or so I thought.

Three years later, I'd broken into the business—I was writing *Power Man and Iron Fist*, my first regular assignment, at the time—and was attending one of my first comics conventions as a pro. It was in Ithaca, New York, which meant I got to hang out with Roger Stern, a superb craftsman and all-around affable guy. Our chat turned to the X-Men, and at one point, Roger commented that he'd like to see Jean Grey return, but there was no way to do it without getting around Shooter's ruling on the matter.

"Sure there is," I said, snot-nosed young whippersnapper that I was.

I outlined the idea I'd come up with, and Roger liked it. Again, there was no thought of actually using it—it was just more comics conversation, and it ended there. Or so, once again, I thought.

It was two years later or so that I was working as the assistant editor on *Marvel Age*, when Bob Layton breezed up to me in Marvel's bullpen and said, "Hey, I hear you're the guy I have to thank for having Jean back!"

"Huh?" I responded brightly, having no idea what he was talking about.

It seems that in the intervening time, Roger had mentioned the idea to his pal John Byrne, and John had liked it, too. And when word got out that Bob would be doing a new series called *X-Factor*, reuniting the four surviving original X-Men, John called Bob and said, "I know a way you could have Jean in the team, too…"

So Bob ran the idea past Jim Shooter, and Jim okayed it. And Roger got to show Jean being found in *Avengers*, John got to revive her in *Fantastic Four*, and Bob got to reunite the original X-Men in *X-Factor #1*. Me, I got paid for the idea, I got a credit line in *Fantastic Four* (even if my name was misspelled, *rowr*), and I got to edit the issue of *Marvel Age* that promoted the whole thing.

Now, you'll notice that I've cleverly taken all the credit for Jean's return (my idea! my idea!) and ducked all the blame (it wasn't me who decided to do it! I didn't even know it was happening!). But all I contributed, in the final analysis, was the idea—the explanation of how Jean could still be alive—and that wasn't a story. It was up to Roger (with John Buscema), John (with some uncredited revisions by Chris Claremont and Jackson Guice, the result of creative differences with the editor-in-chief that would soon see John departing *Fantastic Four*) and Bob Layton (with Guice again) to take that explanation and build an actual story around it. Which they did—and that's what you'll see in the pages that follow. A solid, dramatic, involving story, one that played a significant part in the ongoing history of the Marvel Universe—and which can now serve as a companion volume to *The Dark Phoenix Saga*, filling in latecomers who know, thanks to that volume, how Jean "died," but have never been sure just how she came back.

X-Men: Phoenix Rising TPB (April 1999) cover
by Paul Smith & Liquid!
Reprinting *The Avengers* #263, *The Fantastic Four* #286 and *X-Factor* #1

And that's it—the story of how an idea started out as idle conversation among a group of comics fans, and wound up becoming a reality. To all of you out there who think this story "ruined" *X-Men* #137, my apologies. For my part, I think Phoenix's sacrifice holds up pretty well as a powerful and affecting story, however much it annoyed me at the time of publication—and I'll admit, I do like the Marvel Universe a little better, knowing that Jean's still walking around in it.

But do me a favor, would you? If you ever come up with a great idea for how Uncle Ben or Bucky could still be alive...keep it to yourself, okay?

– Kurt Busiek
February 1999

Fantastic Four Visionaries: John Byrne Vol. 7 TPB (2006) cover
by John Byrne, Terry Austin & Tom Chu

Reprinting *The Fantastic Four* #285-286 & *Annual* #19, *The Avengers* #286 & *Annual* #14 and *X-Factor* #1

Fantastic Four Visionaries: John Byrne Vol. 8 TPB (2006) cover
by John Byrne & John Kalisz

Reprinting *The Fantastic Four* #287-295

BIOGRAPHIES

JOHN BYRNE

With his naturalistic style captivating legions of fans, John Byrne became one of the most influential and popular comic artists of the '70s and '80s. Born in England but raised in Canada, with four years of art school training under his belt, Byrne headed straight for the comics business, getting his start with Charlton Comics.

He produced his first original creations, the robot Rog-2000—which appeared as a backup strip in *E-Man*—and *Doomsday +1* at Charlton. Though the art was rough compared to his later standards, it drew the attention of Marvel Comics, where he found work on *Champions*, *Iron Fist* and *Marvel Team-Up*. The relationship he established on these books with writer Chris Claremont led to his entry on a title that was rapidly ascending in importance at Marvel: the "All-New, All-Different" *X-Men*.

Taking the torch from Dave Cockrum, for the next five years Byrne penciled and co-plotted the adventures of Marvel's mutants. His fresh style translated perfectly to the new cast of characters, and together Byrne and Claremont built the X-Men into a keystone title at Marvel. However, just after the twin triumphs of "The Dark Phoenix Saga" and "Days of Future Past," Byrne left the book.

His next major achievement was a long run as writer/artist on *Fantastic Four* that restored the title to its imaginative best. His run hearkened back to the glory days of Lee and Kirby and is arguably the milestone achievement of his career. Other high points in his early '80s Marvel work included "War and Remembrance," a bracing set of Captain America stories with Roger Stern and *Alpha Flight*, a team of Canadian heroes written and drawn by Byrne.

Next, Byrne headed to DC Comics to revive the flagging Superman franchise with a reset of the Superman mythos that was enormously popular at the time and is still hailed as a masterpiece decades later. After two years helming Superman, Byrne returned to Marvel to work on a diverse set of books including the New Universe's *Star Brand*, the irreverent *Sensational She-Hulk* and the high-tech adventures of Iron Man. In the 1990s, Byrne launched his creator-owned series *Next Men*, scripted the first issues of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* and delivered the goods for both Marvel and DC on numerous titles. Today, the implacable Byrne continues to write, draw and preside over a popular website. He was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame in 2015.

MARK BORAX

Mark Borax lived the life of an itinerant poet in the late 1970s when a meeting with Ray Bradbury established a friendship and mentorship between the young writer and the legendary sci-fi author. Borax became managing editor of *Comics Interview* magazine in 1984 and published stories in Eclipse's *Alien Encounters* #2 ("I Shot the Last Martian") and the Fantastic Four story, "Synchronicity," in *Marvel Fanfare* #37. Borax is now a popular writer in the field of astrology.

NORM BREYFOGLE

Norm Breyfogle (1960-2018) spent time in his kindergarten class drawing Batman and Robin with a proficiency well beyond his peers. After seeing the art of Neal Adams in a 1969 issue of *Brave and the Bold*, Breyfogle had a clear direction in life: a career in comics. By the time he was 12, Norm's mother matched him with a private art instructor to foster his skills. A few years later, Breyfogle sent a redesign of Robin's costume to DC, who published his drawing in *Batman Family* #13 (September 1977). With a degree in illustration from Northern Michigan University under his belt, he would set out to achieve his dream, breaking into the comics industry in 1984. Breyfogle had a pair of stories published in DC's *New Talent Showcase*, after which he spent a year at First Comics drawing *Whisper* and *American Flagg*. He drew a story by Max Allan Collins in *Batman Annual* #11, which started his long association with Batman and showed off what would become a fan-favorite style that defined the Dark Knight for a generation of readers. In the spring of 1987, Breyfogle began a nearly unbroken five-year stint on Batman across *Detective Comics*, *Batman* and *Shadow of the Bat* with his collaborator, writer Alan Grant.

In 1993, Breyfogle co-created *Prime* at Malibu, who also published the second of his two *Metaphysique* miniseries. Breyfogle returned to DC in 1996 for a second stint that included work on *Anarky* and *The Spectre*, after which he focused on indie comics and advertising art. Breyfogle illustrated a range of comics for Marvel over his career with work on *Marvel Fanfare* and, in 2000, a Hellcat saga that spanned multiple titles including a three-issue miniseries. In 2010, Breyfogle commenced an eleven-issue run of *Life with Archie*, after which he drew a two-year run on *Batman Beyond* on DC's Digital platform. In 2014, health complications would limit his ability to draw, and he passed in 2018.

JOHN BUSCEMA

Though primarily known for his long tenure as one of Marvel Comics' most prolific pencilers, John Buscema began his celebrated career at the age of 21 with Timely Comics. After Timely closed its in-house Bullpen, Buscema pursued comics work for a time before he left comics altogether for advertising in 1958.

When he returned to comics, however, he did so with a vengeance. Stan Lee recruited him away from advertising and quickly ensconced him into the upper ranks of Marvel artists. Picking up where *Avengers* mainstay Don Heck left off, "Big John" began what would be one of the title's definitive artistic runs. The much-anticipated *Silver Surfer* series was launched with Buscema at the helm, and top-tier books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* were entrusted to his care after Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics.

Buscema's bold, muscular artwork commanded the comic-book page with realistic figurework that represented the next evolutionary step in post-Kirby Marvel Comics style. The respect accorded him within Marvel as an artist's artist was of such renown that he literally wrote the book on drawing, composing *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* with Stan Lee, the classic "how to" book in comic-book illustration.

He worked from the '70s through the '90s on nearly every title in the Marvel stable, including his personal favorite, *Conan the Barbarian*, with Roy Thomas. He retired in 1996, but returned every now and then to the comics scene until he passed away after a battle with cancer in 2002, the same year he was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

CHRIS CLAREMONT

It is hard to remember a time when the word "mutant" didn't correspond with the largest and most ardently followed franchise

in comics, but in the mid-'70s the X-Men were naught but a forgotten team of misfits. Chris Claremont and his collaborators took this moribund property and issue by issue transformed it into a phenomenon now known the world over.

Claremont began his career in comics in the early '70s pitching in on issues of *Avengers*, *Daredevil* and *Incredible Hulk*, while also delivering several text stories to Marvel's black-and-white magazines. His first regular writing gig was *War Is Hell*, a "weird war" title that came to a close just as his run on *X-Men* and *Iron Fist* began. *Iron Fist*, which rolled out of the pages of *Marvel Premiere*, was done in concert with artist John Byrne, forming a key partnership that would pay big dividends later. Other high-profile projects from Claremont's first full decade in comics included *Marvel Preview*'s Starlord, *Ms. Marvel*, *Marvel Team-Up* (again with Byrne) and *John Carter: Warlord of Mars*.

But it was in the pages of *X-Men* where Claremont would change comics history. In tandem with artists Dave Cockrum and John Byrne, Claremont helped build a cornerstone franchise for Marvel. After writer Len Wein launched the newly updated series in 1975 with *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, Claremont was tasked with guiding the new adventures of the mutant misfits, and he did so by crafting layered stories that balanced crisp dialogue with high-octane action. Claremont placed a premium on characterization, a lofty goal in a team book with many players, but he did so deftly enough to spin a wide-ranging tapestry of characters, each of whom became fan favorites.

Leading breathless fans down the path of classics including "The Dark Phoenix Saga," "Days of Future Past," and *God Loves, Man Kills*, he helped build such an intense loyalty that it only made sense to spin-off the X-Men's success into new books. The first such spin-off was *The New Mutants*. Later in the decade, Claremont launched *Excalibur* with Alan Davis and established a regular series for Wolverine with John Buscema.

In 1990, he launched a new sister title for the main team of mutants with Jim Lee; *X-Men* #1 premiered to numbers that made it the highest-selling comic ever. After a long break from the company, Claremont returned to Marvel in 2000, and over the next ten years wrote the novelization of Bryan Singer's X-Men film, took on the Fantastic Four, and charted the adventures of Marvel's mutants across a variety of titles. He was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame with its 2015 class.

RON FRENZ

Few can match Ron Frenz when it comes to consistency and longevity as an artist. He notched accomplished runs on the field's two most revered and influential characters, Spider-Man and Superman, and carried each through controversial new costume designs. When the 22-year-old broke into the industry, he began as co-penciler of *Ka-Zar the Savage*, and then *Star Wars*. Proving himself on those books, Frenz succeeded John Romita Jr. on *Amazing Spider-Man*, his artwork channeling Steve Ditko's original web-slinger. Next, he joined Tom DeFalco on a six-year-long run on *Thor* with a new look and identity for Marvel's Thunder God. Their efforts led to *Thunderstrike*, a spin-off title featuring Eric Masterson, and the creation of the New Warriors. After an influential run on DC's *Superman*, Frenz returned to Marvel to team with DeFalco on the launch of the MC2 Universe, home of Spider-Girl, the fan-favorite Marvel heroine, for which he drew dozens of issues right up to her final miniseries, *Spectacular Spider-Girl*. In 2001, Frenz joined Kurt Busiek and Erik Larsen on their revival of *The Defenders*, and was part of the jam unit that drew the Lee/Kirby homage *Fantastic Four: The World's Greatest Comics Magazine*. Frenz lent his talents to the 2013 IDW revival of *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero* with series originator Larry Hama and continues to work on projects with his longtime collaborator Tom DeFalco.

KERRY GAMMILL

Kerry Gammill's childhood interest in comics was kindled by Silver Age Marvel and a love of classic monsters from magazines like *Creepy* and *Eerie*. Gammill's first professional work was September 1978's *Marvel Team-Up* #73. After text piece illustrations in *Savage Sword of Conan*, he got his first ongoing gig eighteen months later on *Power Man & Iron Fist*, which he penciled for nearly two years. When he returned to *Marvel Team-Up* it was as the book's regular artist, where he penciled the adventures of Spider-Man and characters like Beast, Captain America, Vision and the Human Torch. In the mid-'80s, Gammill drew *Star Wars*, *The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones*, and entries in *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*. After drawing a 1986 *Wonder Man* one-shot, he dabbled in the X-Universe with the limited series *Fallen Angels* and an issue of *Uncanny X-Men*. By the end of the '80s, Gammill moved his talents to DC, where he drew *Superman* and *Action Comics*, both series scribed by Roger Stern. After a brief return to Marvel, where he drew the first two issues of *Deadly Foes of Spider-Man*, Gammill reduced his comics work to cover art as he established himself in advertising and as a conceptual and storyboard artist in movies and TV. In 2010, he returned to comics to indulge his love of monsters in *Bela Lugosi's Tales From the Grave* for his creator-owned Monsterverse imprint.

BUTCH GUICE

Jackson "Butch" Guice was born in 1961 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Guice was working at a small design company in North Carolina when some of his fanzine art got the attention of Marvel. After being recruited by editor Al Milgrom, Guice didn't let a broken arm from a roller skating accident keep him from drawing his first credited work at Marvel, an extended run on *Micronauts* with writer Bill Mantlo. He worked with Mantlo again on his next projects: a four-issue *X-Men and the Micronauts* miniseries, an *Avengers Annual* and the *Swords of the Swashbucklers* Epic Graphic Novel and ongoing series. After inking four issues of Paul Chadwick's *Dazzler*, Guice joined writer Louise Simonson on *X-Factor* where they co-created the villain Apocalypse. Guice became a regular on Marvel's mutant titles, also working with writer Chris Claremont on *The New Mutants* and a pair of *The Uncanny X-Men* issues. In 1987, he launched a new Flash series at DC, but soon was back at Marvel, drawing *Iron Man*, *Doctor Strange, Sorcerer Supreme* and inking Steve Ditko's pencils on *Speedball*. In the '90s, Guice was returned to DC to draw Superman in *Action Comics*, *Birds of Prey* and *Resurrection Man*, a series featuring a new character co-created with Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning. In 2001, Guice joined writer Mark Waid at CrossGen on the critically-acclaimed *Ruse*. After CrossGen, Guice returned to DC for runs on *JLA: Classified* and *Aquaman: Sword of Atlantis*, but, in 2007, made Marvel his home for much of the next decade-plus joining Ed Brubaker on *Captain America* and *Winter Soldier*, Brian Michael Bendis on *Ultimate Origins*, Nick Spencer on *Secret Avengers* and *The Invaders* with Chip Zdarsky.

STAN LEE

Stanley Lieber was born in New York City in 1922, the oldest son of Jewish immigrants from Romania. Upon an early graduation from high school, Stan was thrust in to the Depression-era economy. Meanwhile, Martin Goodman's Timely Comics needed staff, and Stan, Goodman's wife's cousin, joined as an assistant editor. His youthful aspiration was to one day write the "Great

American Novel," so for his comic book work he adopted a pseudonym: Stan Lee. This way, he could reserve his real name for that novel-to-be.

He quickly graduated from simple text pieces to full-length stories, and before long his proficiency on the job earned him the position of managing editor while still a teenager. His tenure in the '50s saw the company's expansion (under the name Atlas) to include horror, crime, Western, war, satire and romance comics.

All this was a prelude to the Marvel Age of Comics, ushered in under the auspices of Stan Lee and a small stable of artists including the formidably talented Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. Responding to Martin Goodman's challenge to find a way to revitalize dwindling sales, Lee figured he would co-opt the super-hero revival at DC Comics and add his own magic to the mix: Instead of being perfect invulnerable champions, Marvel's heroes would be normal, fallible, imperfect people forced to cope with their newfound superhuman traits just as the average person might.

Lee's innovation sent shock waves throughout comics, and within a few years, Marvelmania was taking hold. Under his direction, the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Thor, Doctor Strange and the Incredible Hulk flourished in the shared universe they inhabited. Lee developed the idea that these larger-than-life heroes would meet each other in crossovers from title to title, thus broadening the story possibilities for eager fans.

In addition to bringing a new twist to the life of the super hero, Lee also brought the reader inside Marvel's "Batty Bullpen," creating a sense of camaraderie and special membership. His friendly and enthusiastic banter in letters pages, house ads and Bullpen Bulletins brought Marvel Comics to a level of familiarity with their fans that had kids and college students proudly professing themselves to be "True Believers."

At one time, Lee wrote virtually every comic that Marvel published during the '60s. But when he was promoted to publisher in 1971, his writing had to take a backseat, and by the mid-'70s, he semi-retired from scripting duties. Over the years, Lee has returned to write scripts for the occasional single issue or series, focusing on Marvel's ventures into television and movie development. His standing in the field was recognized with his induction into the Eisner Hall of Fame in 1994. He remained Marvel Comics' single greatest ambassador to the world until his passing in 2018.

AL MILGROM

Though arguably his highest profile in comics came as the fan-favorite editor of *Marvel Fanfare*, Al Milgrom has made significant contributions as a penciler, inker and writer over his four decades in the industry. Al came up in the '70s both assisting the legendary artist Murphy Anderson and later serving as one of Neal Adams' Crusty Bunkers art squad, in the meantime having his early work published at Charlton Comics, Atlas/Seaboard, Warren and the indie sci-fi anthology *Star*Reach*. His first major inroads in the industry occurred with Marvel, where he followed up Jim Starlin for a long run drawing *Captain Marvel*. Continuing with the sci-fi themes of his seminal creative efforts, he also drew the ongoing adventures of the Guardians of the Galaxy in *Marvel Presents*. At DC, he would develop Firestorm with Gerry Conway. In 1982, Marvel launched the anthology title *Marvel Fanfare*, which often featured Milgrom's editorial notes in cartoon form under the moniker "Editori-Al." While editing that long-running series, Milgrom also had ongoing stints penciling *The Avengers* and *West Coast Avengers* and drew the notable miniseries *Secret Wars II* and *Kitty Pryde & Wolverine*. He also scripted *Spectacular Spider-Man* and *Incredible Hulk*. Since the '90s, Milgrom has spent most of his time inking, with an impressive nine-year run on *X-Factor* and work for Archie amongst his many credits.

JERRY ORDWAY

Jerry Ordway pursued his love of comics from an early age, contributing work to fanzines in the mid-1970s and honing his skills in commercial illustration and on Golden Books before being recruited by DC during a talent search at the 1980 Chicago Comicon. Ordway started at DC as an inker, embellishing *All-Star Squadron* for over a year before taking the reins as penciler. From there he penciled another Roy Thomas-written title, *Infinity Inc.*, for the series' first ten issues. Ordway also inked John Byrne on *Fantastic Four* and much of George Pérez's legendary *Crisis on Infinite Earths* limited series. In the summer of 1986, Ordway began not only drawing but writing the stories of one of his favorite characters with two long stints on *Adventures of Superman* that bookended a long run on *Superman* and included the history-making "Death of Superman" storyline. In 1993, Ordway co-created Wildstar with Al Gordon at Image. The following year, DC published an original graphic novel hardcover of the Ordway-written and drawn *The Power of Shazam*, which spun off into an Ordway-scripted series the following year. After that series wrapped in 1999, Ordway worked on *Avengers*, *Hulk*, *U.S.Agent* and the *Maximum Security* limited series. In 2001, he collaborated with Stan Lee on *Just Imagine Stan Lee with Jerry Ordway Creating JLA*. In the 2000s, Ordway worked primarily with DC, inking, drawing and/or writing various titles including *Wonder Woman, Red Menace* and *Justice Society of America*. In 2019, he contributed to a handful of Marvel titles including a reunion with Roy Thomas on *Captain America and the Invaders: Bahamas Triangle*.

JIM SHOOTER

Writer/artist/editor/publisher Jim Shooter broke into comics as a precocious 13-year-old after submitting a batch of Legion of Super-Heroes pages he had written and drawn. Impressed by what was going on at Marvel, the teenager brought his "Marvel-style" attitude to bear on Legion, rolling off a three-year run that concluded in 1969. During this time, he introduced several memorable Legionnaires and villains and also wrote several stories in *Superman*.

After a five-year break from comics, Shooter returned to the scene, freelancing for both Marvel and DC. He retook the reins of Legion in *Superboy*, and wrote various Marvel titles, which led to a staff position at Marvel in 1976 and a memorable run on *Avengers*. After two years, he succeeded Archie Goodwin as Marvel's editor-in-chief. In his view, Marvel at that time was in editorial chaos, not capitalizing on its full potential. Only 27 years old, Shooter forced his will over all aspects of the publishing regime, establishing an incentive system for creators, streamlining the publishing schedule and enforcing his own high editorial standards on all the books. He continued Marvel's success with licensed titles *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers* and the Epic line of creator-owned comics. Creative efforts included writing *Secret Wars* and its sequel, and building the New Universe and writing its flagship title, *Starbrand*.

Forced out of the company in 1987, a bid by Shooter to buy Marvel failed. He then formed a group to start his own company, Valiant, which produced licensed and original comics to great acclaim in the early '90s. Despite Valiant's success, Shooter's tenure there was ended after losing control of the corporation. Short-lived imprints Defiant and Broadway Comics followed but were victims of the mid-'90s industry bust. Since then, Shooter has returned to DC to write a 13-issue run of *Legion*, and overseen a revival of Gold Key characters Magnus, Doctor Solar and Turok for Dark Horse.

MARC SILVESTRI

Born in Florida in 1958, Marc Silvestri grew up with a love for comics and science fiction movies that inspired him to become a comic book artist. He developed his skills well enough that by the age of 23, he attended a convention to try to gauge interest in his work. DC vice president and veteran artist Joe Orlando was impressed enough with the young Silvestri's portfolio that he hired him to draw backup stories in DC's horror anthologies. Silvestri jumped over to Marvel soon after, settling in for a long run on *King Conan/Conan the King*, after which he illustrated the Marvel Graphic Novel *Revenge of the Living Monolith*, issues of *X-Factor* and *Web of Spider-Man*. In 1987, he established himself as one of the defining artists of the X-Men, first with the *X-Men vs. The Avengers* miniseries, then an iconic run drawing *The Uncanny X-Men* that would last through 1990. He followed that up with a two-year stint on *Wolverine* that delved deeper into the character's origins. In the summer of 1992, Silvestri and six of his peers shocked the comics industry by leaving Marvel and forming Image Comics, a creator-owned independent publishing company. Under his Image imprint Top Cow, he created and drew *Cyberforce*, joined by brother Eric as scripter, and scripted the spinoff series *Codename: Stryke Force*. In 1995, he co-created *The Darkness* with writer Garth Ennis and *Witchblade*, a property that Silvestri helped develop into its own popular 2001-2002 TV series on the TNT network. Silvestri returned to Marvel in 2004, drawing *New X-Men* "Here Comes Tomorrow," the conclusion to Grant Morrison's revolutionary run. Since then, Silvestri has contributed to the X-Men events "Messiah Complex" and "Utopia," issues of Jason Aaron's *The Incredible Hulk* series and dozens of covers for Marvel.

ROGER STERN

Born in Noblesville, Indiana, in 1950, Roger Stern was a self-professed "child of the '50s," immersing himself in pop culture icons like Lucille Ball, the Lone Ranger, and especially Superman. After graduating from Indiana University, Stern worked at Indianapolis' WXLW radio and formed a comic fan collective with fans in the region. Stern teamed with fellow Hoosier Bob Layton to transform Layton's comic sales business into the fanzine *CPL* (*Contemporary Pictorial Literature*). Their efforts led to an offer from Charlton to create the publisher's official fanzine, *Charlton Bullseye*. Soon after, Stern's fandom pal Roger Slifer contacted him with an opportunity to interview for a Marvel staff job. Stern raced to New York to put his passion for comics to the test. He was hired as an assistant editor and in 1975 embarked on an eleven-year career at Marvel. Stern's early editing duties saw him guiding the Avengers family of titles, *Master of Kung Fu*, *Spider-Woman*, and others. He also presided over *X-Men* during the seminal Chris Claremont, John Byrne, and Terry Austin run, and plotted *Marvel Premiere* #50 starring rocker Alice Cooper.

In 1978, he began to take on regular writing work on *The Incredible Hulk* and *Doctor Strange*. His compelling storytelling quickly earned him an audience and turns writing *Captain America* and Spider-Man in *The Spectacular Spider-Man*. The latter title led to his tenure on *The Amazing Spider-Man*, a run regarded by many as second only to Stan Lee's. Amongst their many Spidey highlights, Stern and artist John Romita Jr. introduced the Hobgoblin and a new Captain Marvel, Monica Rambeau. Stern also began a long stint on *The Avengers*, launched *West Coast Avengers*, and returned for another celebrated run on *Doctor Strange*.

When his tenure with Marvel came to an end in the late '80s, Stern became indelibly linked to the Man of Steel with iconic work that included "The Death of Superman." Since then "Uncle Rog," as he is known to his devoted fans, has returned to Marvel to write several series including *Avengers Forever*, *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Marvel: The Lost Generation*, *Captain America Corps*, and more.

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH

A brash newcomer to the American comics scene in the late '60s, London-born Barry Windsor-Smith rose from drawing his first American comics work on a New York City park bench to become one of the medium's most influential artists, driving his passion for pre-Raphaelite naturalism and Art Nouveau design into mainstream comics.

Influenced from an early age by artists like Jack Kirby and Gil Kane, Windsor-Smith made it a goal to one day work for Marvel Comics. His first professional forays produced artwork for *X-Men*, *Daredevil* and *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, all of which revealed a young man ardently working to define his own voice while mastering the lessons of his artistic forebears.

He first stepped out in a big way on *Conan the Barbarian,* Marvel's adaptation of Robert E. Howard's sword and sorcery character. It was here that Windsor-Smith developed a stunningly fresh approach to comic-art draftsmanship, holding on to Kirby's dynamic energy but pouring an increasing amount of time into detailed, lyrical figure drawing. As his skills developed, it became clear that Windsor-Smith's work on *Conan* was a clarion call for comic artists who wanted to take a more refined approach to their illustration.

In addition to making Conan into a bona fide hit, Windsor-Smith also turned in memorable work on *Avengers*, Doctor Strange in *Marvel Premiere* and Ka-Zar in *Astonishing Tales*, after which he started Gorblimey Press, his own studio that produced original prints and stories entirely of his own making, a concern that is still ongoing today.

A return to Marvel in 1984 produced a handful of projects that made a huge impression: a Machine Man limited series; the groundbreaking excursion into Wolverine's origin, "Weapon X"; "Lifedeath," a pair of timeless Storm stories told in *The Uncanny X-Men* and a myriad of classic covers.

In the 1990s, Windsor-Smith took on the role of creative director for Valiant Comics, an upstart company formed by former Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter. The Valiant line, including Windsor-Smith's *Archer and Armstrong*, *Solar: Man of the Atom* and *Unity*, was a big hit in part to Windsor-Smith's masterful work. He also created Malibu Comics' *Rune*, Dark Horse's *BWS: Storyteller* anthology and began his series of autobiographical art books, *Opus*. Winsor-Smith's decades-in-the making graphic novel *Monsters* was published in 2021. His accomplishments within the field were recognized by the Eisner Hall of Fame in 2008.

Biographies researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

MARVEL MASTERWORKS

THE MARVEL MASTERWORKS LIBRARY PRESENTS THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC BOOKS, PAINSTAKINGLY RESTORED FROM THE HIGHEST-QUALITY SOURCES AND WITH THE MOST DILIGENT ARCHIVAL METHODS.

THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over America, a new storytelling medium was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States. At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary creators as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee.

GOLDEN AGE ALL-WINNERS VOLS. 1-4
GOLDEN AGE CAPTAIN AMERICA VOLS. 1-6
GOLDEN AGE DARING MYSTERY VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE HUMAN TORCH VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE MARVEL COMICS VOLS. 1-7
GOLDEN AGE MYSTIC COMICS VOL. 1
GOLDEN AGE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE U.S.A. COMICS VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the Golden Age retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, the Atlas Era had it all!

ATLAS ERA BATTLEFIELD VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA BLACK KNIGHT/YELLOW CLAW VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA HEROES VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA JUNGLE ADVENTURE VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA MENACE VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA STRANGE TALES VOLS. 1-6
ATLAS ERA TALES TO ASTONISH VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1

THE MARVEL AGE

In August 1961, change hit newsstands: *The Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. They were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves — and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different — the beginning of the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN VOLS. 1-26
ANT-MAN/GIANT-MAN VOLS. 1-3
THE AVENGERS VOLS. 1-25
THE AVENGERS WEST COAST VOL. 1
THE BLACK PANTHER VOLS. 1-3
BROTHER VOODOO VOL. 1
CAPTAIN AMERICA VOLS. 1-16
CAPTAIN MARVEL VOLS. 1-6
THE CHAMPIONS VOL. 1
DAREDEVIL VOLS. 1-19
DAZZLER VOLS. 1-4
DEATHLOK VOL. 1
THE DEFENDERS VOLS. 1-9
DOCTOR STRANGE VOLS. 1-11
THE FANTASTIC FOUR VOLS. 1-27
GHOST RIDER VOLS. 1-6
HOWARD THE DUCK VOLS. 1-2
THE HUMAN TORCH VOLS. 1-2
THE INCREDIBLE HULK VOLS. 1-18
THE INHUMANS VOLS. 1-2
THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN VOLS. 1-18
IRON FIST VOLS. 1-2
KA-ZAR VOLS. 1-4
KILLRAVEN VOL. 1
LUKE CAGE VOLS. 1-3
THE MAN-THING VOL. 1
MARVEL RARITIES VOL. 1
MARVEL TEAM-UP VOLS. 1-8
MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE VOLS. 1-7
THE MIGHTY THOR VOLS. 1-23
MS. MARVEL VOLS. 1-2
NICK FURY, AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. VOLS. 1-3
NOT BRAND ECHH VOL. 1
OMEGA THE UNKNOWN VOL. 1
RAWHIDE KID VOLS. 1-2
THE SAVAGE SHE-HULK VOLS. 1-2
SGT. FURY VOLS. 1-4
THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN VOLS. 1-8
SPIDER-WOMAN VOLS. 1-4
THE SILVER SURFER VOLS. 1-2
THE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-8
THE TOMB OF DRACULA VOLS. 1-4
THE VISION AND THE SCARLET WITCH VOL. 1
WARLOCK VOLS. 1-2
WEREWOLF BY NIGHT VOLS. 1-3
THE X-MEN VOLS. 1-8
THE UNCANNY X-MEN VOLS. 1-16

KAMIC RIDER
MARIKA